



The Whitehall Elite, c. 1919-1956

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Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis examines the interwar British Civil Service. It centres on the 'elite of the elite' – the Permanent Secretaries who presided over the most prestigious and central departments. Both officials and officialdom have hitherto been obscured by a heavy shroud which was the deliberate product of resilient official narratives. This thesis interrogates the mythology surrounding Permanent Secretaries and peers behind the arras to illuminate facets of their work and world, including their rise and fall, their relationships, their culture, and their influence on decision-making. In contrast to many previous interpretations of the Whitehall elite and the nature of decision-making, this thesis reflects on the fundamental interconnectedness of the governing elite, the importance of dependencies, and thus the need to examine networks or clusters rather than individuals. It takes as a central tenet that individuals mattered, but they mattered collectively. It argues that this generation of Permanent Secretaries were giant personalities. They were not homogenous, but heterogeneity was often constrained within narrow limits. This gave rise to a style – the Georgian style – which was male, middle-class, white, Christian, and fundamentally conservative. However, although giant personalities, these figures were not influential. This thesis demonstrates that the Whitehall elite possessed less systemic influence than first imagined, even when acting collectively. Civil Service influence in this period is therefore ultimately at greater risk of being overemphasised than underestimated. Furthermore, this thesis provides original insight into how to study power and influence. It posits that the study of power is greatly enriched by distinguishing between forms of influence. It conceptualises different types of influence – 'obstructive', 'constructive', 'collective', and 'derivative' – to nuance and deepen understandings. In this way, it distils important universal lessons on the nature of power and influence.

Contents

Declaration.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
Abstract.....	4
Contents.....	5
A Note on Names and Grammar.....	6
List of Abbreviations.....	7
Introduction.....	9
Chapter One: Power and Promotions.....	24
Chapter Two: Room at the Top.....	57
Chapter Three: Policy Networks and Obstructive Influence.....	100
Chapter Four: Policy Networks and Constructive Influence.....	134
Chapter Five: Reforming the Machinery of Government.....	171
Chapter Six: Exit Stage Left?.....	198
Conclusion.....	238
Bibliography.....	244

A Note on Names and Grammar

I have tended not to refer to officials by their formal titles and honours (for example, Sir Richard Hopkins or Lord Hankey). This is to avoid confusion and anachronism as titles and honours were accumulated over the course of a career.

Where I have cited a direct quotation, I have maintained the author's own grammar, spelling, and emphasis. Any additions to a direct quotation, such as for purposes of clarity, have been indicated using square brackets.

'Permanent Secretary' is used as a shorthand for those at the apex of departments, although such officials were formally given the title of 'Permanent Secretary', 'Permanent Under-Secretary', or 'Cabinet Secretary', depending on the department.

I have used the word 'mandarin' to describe elite officials in the Civil Service. It became apparent during this research that some scholars dislike this terminology. I have retained the term 'mandarin' as it is widely used to describe senior civil servants in British political discourse, such as in the press and even within Whitehall itself. However, while to some the term 'mandarin' may carry connotations of a particular type of official – such as one with extensive powers – 'mandarin' here should only be understood as a shorthand for a civil servant or official.

List of Abbreviations

ADM: Papers of the Admiralty
AIR: Papers of the Air Office
ARP: Air Raid Precautions
ARPS: Air Raid Precautions Services
BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation
BEF: British Expeditionary Force
BL: British Library
CAB: Papers of the Cabinet Office
CAC: Churchill Archives Centre
CAS: Chief of the Air Staff
CID: Committee of Imperial Defence
CIGS: Chief of the Imperial General Staff
CNS: Chief of the Naval Staff
COS: Chiefs of Staff
CP: Cabinet Paper
CRL: Cadbury Research Library
CUL: Cambridge University Library
DCM: Ministerial Committee on Disarmament
DRC: Defence Requirements Committee
FO: Papers of the Foreign Office
GCB: Knight Grand Cross, Order of the Bath
HDC: Home Defence Committee
HMG: His/Her Majesty's Government
HMSO: His/Her Majesty's Stationery Office
HO: Home Office
HPC: Home Ports Committee
IPPR: Institute for Public Policy Research
IWM: Imperial War Museum
LCO: Papers of the Lord Chancellor's Office
MP: Member of Parliament
NLS: National Library Scotland
NLW: National Library Wales
OM: Order of Merit

PA: Parliamentary Archives
PAC: Public Accounts Committee
PREM: Papers of the Prime Minister's Office
PRO: Public Records Office
PUS: Permanent Under-Secretary
RAF: Royal Air Force
RIIA: Royal Institute of International Affairs
RUSI: Royal United Services Institute
T: Papers of the Treasury
TA: Territorial Army
TNA: The National Archives
UN: United Nations
WO: Papers of the War Office

Introduction

Behind the arras I'll convey myself ...¹

The most intriguing and consequential dimension of Whitehall was, and remains, the exercise of power. It is also the aspect of officialdom which insiders have gone to the greatest lengths to conceal and is the most difficult to illuminate.

It was the officials who occupied the highest posts in the Civil Service and operated most closely to ministers who were best able to exercise influence in public affairs.² This research therefore centres on the 'elite of the elite' – Permanent Secretaries who presided over the most prestigious and central departments during the interwar years. Warren Fisher, Horace Wilson, and Richard Hopkins dominated the Treasury in this period, just as John Anderson was a towering figure in the Home Office. Maurice Hankey and Edward Bridges were instrumental in transforming the Cabinet Office into the gearbox of government, while it fell to Robert Vansittart and Alexander Cadogan to steer the Foreign Office through very turbulent times.

Four central themes run through this study of the Whitehall elite. The first identifies this group as a generation and illuminates the group's dominant culture and style. The second theme speaks to the fundamental interconnectedness of central government, especially the personal and professional networks of mandarins and ministers. In interrogating relationships, the thesis operates on the premise that dynamics between individuals were not static over time, and that relationships were complex, with competition and cooperation often working in tandem. Developing this premise, the third theme explores power and influence, two distinct phenomena. Recognising the fundamental truth that mandarins could aspire to *influence*, but rarely *power*, it investigates to what extent the giants of Whitehall were influential and how. The fourth theme reflects on the secrecy which surrounds Whitehall in scrutinising the

¹ Polonius in William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, edited by Burton Raffel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), Act III, Scene III, 129.

² Harold Edward Dale, *The Higher Civil Service of Great Britain* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), 10; 42.

shortcomings of the literature and the role played by insiders as mythmakers and gatekeepers of history.

Power and Influence

It is unsurprising that a study of Whitehall engages with the concept of bureaucratic power. At the heart of this discourse are contrasting definitions. Bureaucracy is often synonymous with lazy obstructionism and mendacious tyranny.³ However, bureaucracy can describe a form of efficient organisation, or a form of inefficient organisation ('red tape'). It is also used to characterise the situation when officials are administrators, or when officials become powerful political actors.⁴ Even the roots of the word (*bureau* – desk, and *κράτος* – power) open it to wide interpretation. Max Weber posited that bureaucracy in the hands of officials was the highest form of efficient, rational administration in a large, modern state.⁵ At the same time, Weber sounded the alarm. If bureaucracy rested on administration by expert career officials who reflected society's class hierarchy, then conservative officials would define state interests only in conservative terms.⁶ Yet most significantly, Weber was concerned by how the bureaucracy could be restricted to its proper functions and subordinated to politicians. Weber envisaged a scenario in which the bureaucracy would leverage greater expertise and the cloak of secrecy in which it enveloped itself to triumph over dilettante politicians. This was the central joke in the 1980s BBC comedy, *Yes Minister*. Sir Humphrey Appleby (the Permanent Secretary) ran rings around his inexperienced minister. Predicated on Weberian fears of an omnipotent Civil Service usurping weak, democratically elected politicians, *Yes Minister* was very popular and captured the public's imagination. Forty years later, it remains the dominant image of the Higher Civil Service in British popular culture.⁷

³ C.K. Munro, *The Fountains in Trafalgar Square: Some Reflections on the Civil Service* (London: William Heinemann, 1952), 5.

⁴ Rodney Lowe, 'Bureaucracy Triumphant or Denied? The Expansion of the British Civil Service, 1919-1939', *Public Administration*, 62 (1984), 291-310 (292-293).

⁵ Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation* (New York: The Free Press, 1964 edition), especially 338-339.

⁶ David Beetham, *Max Weber and the Theory of Modern Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985 edition), 66-73.

⁷ Shannon Granville, 'Downing Street's Favourite Soap Opera: Evaluating the Impact of 'Yes Minister' and 'Yes, Prime Minister'', *Contemporary British History*, 23:3 (2009), 315-336.

Officials possessed a wealth of resources and capabilities.⁸ Chief among these were expertise and control of information; a keen eye for network-building; the ability to develop strong relations with the most important politicians and mandarins; and an understanding of the strategies and ‘rules of the games’ in Whitehall. To these assets must be added access and proximity to people, information, and the loci of decision-making.⁹ However, interpreting power as *resources* can be misleading. While officials were richly endowed with resources, these resources indicate only potential, not realised, influence, and do not account for how they were converted into influence. Alternatively, understanding power as *outcomes* can be effective, although this is problematic if it prompts misleading conclusions about the relative balance of power between two actors. Instead, the notion that power is a *relationship* and form of behavioural control through which actors secure desired outcomes is highly intriguing.¹⁰ This is perhaps best illustrated by Robert Dahl’s classic formulation that ‘A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do’.¹¹ Power, then, is fundamentally about making a difference to a pre-existing state of affairs and securing desired outcomes.¹² However, whereas Dahl made no distinction between power and influence, these are two distinct phenomena.¹³ Power concerns command and coercion. In its purest form, power does not require consensus or consultation; power is about the exercise of will.¹⁴ Influence is more subtle and more intangible: it is therefore more difficult to understand, measure, and trace.¹⁵ Influence is about changing the actions of others through persuasion and even manipulation.¹⁶ When studying mandarins, it is *influence*, far more than *power*, which historians should seek to elucidate, for mandarins could not compel ministers to act.

Power is never static and always relative.¹⁷ Such power asymmetries underpin Michael Handel’s concept of ‘derivative’ influence. Adapted from its original

⁸ Martin J. Smith, *The Core Executive in Britain* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 118.

⁹ Carl Schmitt, *Dialogues on Power and Space*. Edition edited by Andreas Kalyvas and Federico Finchelstein, and translated by Samuel Garrett Zeitlin (Cambridge: Polity, 2015), 34-38.

¹⁰ Voltaire and Max Weber agreed, see Robert Strausz-Hupé, *Power and Community* (New York: Praeger, 1956), 4.

¹¹ Robert Dahl, ‘The Concept of Power’, *Behavioural Science*, 2:3 (1957), 201-215 (202-203).

¹² Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990); Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984 edition), 14.

¹³ Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1972), 142.

¹⁴ William Beveridge, *Power and Influence* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1953), 3.

¹⁵ Lisa VeneKlasen and Valerie Miller, *A New Weave of Power, People and Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation* (Rugby: Practical Action, 2007 edition), 45-47.

¹⁶ Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. Revised by Kenneth Thompson (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 30-31.

¹⁷ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 170.

international relations context, derivative influence characterises how weaker actors in the relative balance of power manoeuvre and use resources ‘to obtain, commit and manipulate ... the power of other, more powerful [actors] ... in their own interests’.¹⁸ It is best conceptualised as the ‘tail that wags the dog’.¹⁹ A related phenomenon, ‘collective’ influence, is when actors of a similar status in the relative balance of power – namely, groups of Permanent Secretaries – build coalitions through shared interests which are then leveraged into influence.²⁰ Collective influence echoes Hannah Arendt’s assertion that ‘power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert’.²¹ Both collective and derivative modes of influence are fundamentally cooperative and thus cannot be understood without reference to relationships, interactions, and networks.²²

Power is also inseparable from context, and this thesis identifies two new contextual distinctions which have often been overlooked. They are described here as ‘constructive’ and ‘obstructive’ influence. Constructive influence signifies the ability to generate, and ensure the implementation of, policy change. However, the absence of, or resistance to, change can also signal influence. Obstructive influence therefore speaks to mandarins’ ability to manipulate the decision-making apparatus to reject or block a policy option.

Sources and Approaches

With some notable exceptions, such as the study of appeasement, the Civil Service is often relegated to a lesser role in British political history than party politics, the world of Westminster, and the Cabinet. This is understandable given insiders’ determined efforts to cloak their institution, and how difficult it is to uncover Whitehall from masses of bland archival records.²³ The most important scholarship on Whitehall

¹⁸ Michael Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (London: Frank Cass, 1981), 257-258.

¹⁹ Tom Long, ‘Small States, Great Power? Gaining Influence through Intrinsic, Derivative, and Collective Power’, *International Studies Review*, 19 (2017), 185-205 (196-197).

²⁰ Long, ‘Small States, Great Power?’, 195; 198.

²¹ Arendt, *Crises in the Republic*, 143.

²² Robert O. Keohane, ‘The Big Influence of Small Allies’, *Foreign Policy*, 2 (1971), 161-182 (161-165).

²³ Max Beloff, ‘The Whitehall Factor: The Role of the Higher Civil Service 1919-39’ in *The Politics of Reappraisal 1918-1939*, edited by Gillian Peele and Chris Cook (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1975), 209-231 (209-210; 227).

and Permanent Secretaries can be found into two categories. The first is biography; the second is departmental or institutional studies.

Biographies occupy a crucially important place in the historiography. They place their subject's life and work on the centre stage in presenting the past in relation to an individual and from their perspective.²⁴ The best biographies of mandarins do not simply offer insight into a person – their assumptions, motives, and activities – but also begin to illuminate their institutions, as well as wider social trends.²⁵ The weaknesses of biographies are nonetheless considerable. Many were commissioned by the family and friends of the subject, or else relied heavily on acquaintances' prejudiced memories in an age before the opening of archives.²⁶ However, biographers at any temporal distance can become too close to their subjects, and such scholarship tends to display an unfortunate degree of hagiography.²⁷ Furthermore, biography often depends on descriptive narrative – telling the story of an individual's life – rather than critical analysis. Biographies are also intrinsically linked to Great Man history, as well as to the cult of the individual. While biographies are predicated on the assumption that their subjects mattered, the focus on a single individual often distorts and exaggerates an individual's role and influence. They thus negate the reality that Whitehall was characterised by interaction more than independence.²⁸ In addition, biographies rarely grasp that institutions defined mandarins' roles, and ultimately neglect to explore the environment in which officials worked. Very few biographies begin to unearth the complexities of the Whitehall machine, or extrapolate wider insights into power, cultures, or networks.

Moreover, not all interwar elite officials have even received biographical treatment. Alongside full-length biographies of Maurice Hankey, Robert Vansittart, and Warren Fisher, there has been patchy treatment of their colleagues. Richard Chapman's biography of Edward Bridges only covers a short period of his professional life, while John Wheeler-Bennett's hagiographical account of John Anderson's life lacks sufficient

²⁴ Michael Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), xi.

²⁵ For instance, Eunan O'Halpin, *Head of the Civil Service: A Study of Sir Warren Fisher* (London: Routledge, 1989); John Naylor, *A Man and an Institution: Sir Maurice Hankey, the Cabinet Secretariat and the Custody of Cabinet Secrecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

²⁶ One of the best examples is Sibyl Crowe and Edward Corp, *Our Ablest Public Servant: Sir Edward Crowe, 1864-1925* (Braunton: Merlin Books, 1993).

²⁷ See, for instance, Norman Rose, *Vansittart: Study of a Diplomat* (London: Heinemann, 1978).

²⁸ Richard Chapman, *Ethics in the British Civil Service* (London: Routledge, 1988), 287; Kevin Theakston (ed.), *Bureaucrats and Leadership* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 4-5.

material and analysis.²⁹ There is scant scholarship on William Tyrrell and Ronald Lindsay, and the same is true for Richard Hopkins; there has been even less research on Robert Russell Scott and Alexander Maxwell.³⁰ Although central to pre-war and wartime diplomacy, Alexander Cadogan has evaded the biographical tendency to a considerable extent.³¹ Cadogan appears most prominently in dense scholarship on the wider politics and diplomacy of the period.³² The same is true for Horace Wilson, one of the most controversial figures of the age and an individual who historians have found remarkably difficult to capture.³³

Similarly, institutional histories vary greatly in scope and quality. Zara Steiner's ground-breaking work on the Foreign Office has since been supplemented by contributions from historians including Thomas Otte, Ephraim Maisel, and the publications of the FCDO Historians.³⁴ There exists a profusion of work on the Foreign Office, from studies of diplomacy and mindsets to administrative history. However, these scholars rarely consider themselves to be historians of the Civil Service. Instead, they are 'international historians', more interested in the questions of what diplomats thought, wrote, and advised, rather than what they were able to achieve and how. These studies also add currency to the mistaken assumption that the Foreign Office was entirely separate and wholly distinct from the rest of the Civil Service. Another department which has attracted considerable historical interest – although to a lesser degree than the Foreign Office – is the Treasury.³⁵ The most successful of its historians remains George Peden, who made great strides in cracking open the Treasury's world.³⁶

²⁹ Chapman, *Ethics*; John Wheeler-Bennett, *John Anderson: Viscount Waverley* (London: Macmillan, 1962).

³⁰ Keith Neilson and T.G. Otte, *The Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1854-1946* (London: Routledge, 2009); G.C. Peden, 'Sir Richard Hopkins and the 'Keynesian Revolution' in Employment Policy, 1929-45', *Economic History Review*, 36:2 (1983), 281-296.

³¹ Neilson and Otte, *Permanent Under-Secretary*; see also the biographical essay in David Dilks (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1938-1945* (London: Cassell, 1971).

³² For instance, Peter Neville, 'Sir Alexander Cadogan and Lord Halifax's "Damascus Road" Conversion over the Godesberg Terms, 1938', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 11:3 (2000), 81-90.

³³ Rodney Lowe and Richard Roberts, 'Sir Horace Wilson, 1900-1935: The Making of a Mandarin', *The Historical Journal*, 30:3 (1987), 641-662; G.C. Peden, 'Sir Horace Wilson and Appeasement', *The Historical Journal*, 53:4 (2010), 983-1014; Adrian Phillips, *Fighting Churchill, Appeasing Hitler* (London: Biteback, 2019).

³⁴ Zara Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969); T.G. Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Foreign Policy, 1865-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Ephraim Maisel, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1919-1926* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1994).

³⁵ An early contribution was Henry Roseveare, *The Treasury: The Evolution of a British Institution* (London: Allen Lane, 1969).

³⁶ G.C. Peden, *British Rearmament and the Treasury, 1932-1939* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1979); *The Treasury and British Public Policy, 1906-1959* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

In contrast, the relatively poorly understood Cabinet and Home Offices have yet to find successful scholarly champions.³⁷

There have been attempts to move beyond rigid departmental barriers and to offer a multi-departmental perspective. This sometimes takes the form of slicing through a cross-section of officials. The most successful of these types of work is Peter Barberis's interdisciplinary study on Permanent Secretaries in the twentieth century.³⁸ His conclusions are nuanced and penetrating, although more evidence would strengthen his study. Lamentably, the majority of work on the ranks of the Higher Civil Service has been undertaken by political scientists who offer either dry statistical analyses or vague generalisations.³⁹

There also exist institutional studies which attempt to roam liberally over the whole Civil Service.⁴⁰ Similarly, these attempts necessarily fall short of their ambitions and become too generalised to be particularly insightful. It is a mistake to conceive of the entire Civil Service as one monolithic entity, governed at all levels by the same practices and cultures. What is worse, many such studies are specifically designed with the Civil Service's contemporary deficiencies in mind. They often seek to better understand the institution and its failings by 'placing present problems in historical context' to offer a guide to reform.⁴¹ They are thus written with a clear political bent.

There are, however, even more fundamental flaws with much of the scholarship on the Civil Service. There is an unfortunate obsession with what might be termed the 'official narrative'. Histories of the Civil Service have struggled to dispel the mystery from Whitehall because scholars speak and write of the Civil Service in the exact ways in which insiders desired.⁴² Those who seek to investigate often find themselves led by

³⁷ A very one-dimensional example is Anthony Seldon and Jonathan Meakin, *The Cabinet Office, 1916-2016: The Birth of Modern Government* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2016).

³⁸ Peter Barberis, *The Elite of the Elite: Permanent Secretaries in the British Higher Civil Service* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1996).

³⁹ R.K. Kelsall, *Higher Civil Servants in Britain: from 1870 to the Present Day* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955); Geoffrey Kingdon Fry, *Statesmen in Disguise: The Changing Role of the Administrative Class of the British Home Civil Service, 1853-1966* (London: Macmillan, 1969); Kevin Theakston, *Leadership in Whitehall* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999); Kevin Theakston, *The British Civil Service Elite: Permanent Secretaries since 1945* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2005).

⁴⁰ A good example is Keith Dowding, *The Civil Service* (London: Routledge, 1995).

⁴¹ Rodney Lowe, *The Official History of the British Civil Service. Reforming the Civil Service, Volume I: The Fulton Years* (London: Routledge, 2011), 3; Peter Hennessy, *Whitehall* (London: Fontana, 1990), 10-11.

⁴² For example, Kevin Theakston, *The Civil Service since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995).

the nose. The works of Peter Hennessy, who occupies a commanding position within the field, represent the low point of critical engagement. A journalist-turned-historian-turned-peer, Hennessy purports to leverage his 'insider' status to lay bare the many mysteries of Whitehall. His reliance on oral history, which often amounts to the testimony of his close acquaintances, is highly problematic and sets the evidentiary barrier low. His journalistic-style methods only serve to perpetuate myths.⁴³

Similarly, George Jones and Andrew Blick have achieved mixed success in attempting to draw the shadowy world of special advisors; while their studies offer insight into minister-advisor relationships, Blick and Jones are victims of their reliance on insiders' anecdotes for a contemporary perspective.⁴⁴ It is all too easy to fall into the trap of 'anecdote history' (an over-reliance on skewed oral testimonies and memoirs) when grappling with shadowy figures in Whitehall. This is excusable for those seeking to write contemporary history without access to records. Yet, persisting with such a flawed approach even after archives have opened is unsatisfactory. Certainly, interviews and testimonies have an important part to play in illuminating Whitehall. They do not, however, belong at the forefront of research. They must be used carefully to complement intensive archival study and must not be automatically accepted as the gospel of truth.⁴⁵

This research therefore breaks from such conventional methodologies to explore Whitehall's complex internal logic. It eschews the once ubiquitous approach of individual biography in favour of collective biography. There is a clear rationale supporting this group approach. Mandarins' lives were interwoven, even before they reached the highest posts, and long after retiring from those great offices. Moreover, work in Whitehall, even at the very top, was often teamwork, and it is thus a distortion to study mandarins individually.⁴⁶ It is on collective and interactive processes, such as committees and networks, that the focus must rest. Individuals mattered, but they mattered collectively; they must therefore be studied as a cohort. Furthermore, collective biography illuminates connections and patterns. How individuals' lives and

⁴³ Hennessy, *Whitehall*; Peter Hennessy, *The Hidden Wiring: Unearthing the British Constitution* (London: Indigo, 1996).

⁴⁴ Andrew Blick, *People Who Live in the Dark* (London: Politico's Publishing, 2004); Andrew Blick and George Jones, *At Power's Elbow: Aides to the Prime Minister from Robert Walpole to David Cameron* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2013).

⁴⁵ For a good discussion of oral history and archival research, see Simon Ball, 'Harold Macmillan and the Politics of Defence: The Market for Strategic Ideas during the Sandys Era Revisited', *Twentieth Century British History*, 6:1 (1995), 78-100 (especially 97-100).

⁴⁶ Theakston, *Bureaucrats and Leadership*, 1-16.

work were similar, and how they were different, speaks to dominant institutional and generational cultures. Such an approach thus sheds light on the individual, the group, and the environment.⁴⁷ Despite scholars having long-since recognised the utility of group biography, successful examples are regrettably rare.⁴⁸ Peter Barberis's thematic work on Permanent Secretaries in the twentieth century is an isolated example of a truly comparative and collective study.⁴⁹ Keith Neilson, Thomas Otte, Anthony Seldon, Ian Beesley, and Kevin Theakston have promised collective and comparative biographies of the Whitehall elite, but their efforts are methodologically disappointing. In demarcating separate chapters for individuals, these historians offer few comparisons, and rarely reveal interactions or group identities. Indeed, this approach of collecting mini-biographies in a single volume is little different to stacking full-length biographies side-by-side on a shelf.⁵⁰

The parameters of this thesis have been set to reflect Whitehall's actual rhythms and processes. The thesis centres on officials who captained four departments between 1919 and 1946. The four departments – the Treasury, the Cabinet Office, the Home Office, and the Foreign Office – reflect not only their centrality within the government machine, but also their breadth of functions and the overlapping spheres within Whitehall: defence, foreign, and home.⁵¹

The Treasury was a central department with its finger on the government's financial pulse. This gifted the institution knowledge, authority, and an unfortunate reputation for arrogant heavy-handedness.⁵² The Finance side of the Treasury dealt with fiscal and economic matters, while the Establishments side was concerned with the coordination and control of the Civil Service, from staffing and regulations to pay. From 1919, Permanent Secretaries to the Treasury were bestowed with the controversial title of Head of the Civil Service. The Cabinet Office was a similarly central department.⁵³ It was the product of wartime innovation that prospered in peace. The Cabinet Office might best be described as a bridge, linking the Cabinet and departments. It was 'pure

⁴⁷ Ira Bruce Nadel, *Biography: Fiction, Fact and Form* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 191-193.

⁴⁸ One of the best examples remains Simon Ball, *The Guardsmen: Harold Macmillan, Three Friends and the World They Made* (London: Harper Perennial, 2005).

⁴⁹ Barberis, *The Elite of the Elite*.

⁵⁰ Neilson and Otte, *Permanent Under-Secretary*; Seldon and Meakin, *The Cabinet Office*; Ian Beesley, *The Official History of the Cabinet Secretaries* (London: Routledge, 2017); Kevin Theakston, *Leadership in Whitehall* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

⁵¹ Munro, *Fountains in Trafalgar Square*, 92.

⁵² The National Archives, Kew, London [hereafter TNA], T/268/18, 'The Board of Treasury', Fisher, 23 January 1924; Hennessy, *Whitehall*, 394; Theakston, *Leadership in Whitehall*, 49.

⁵³ Naylor, *A Man and an Institution*.

bureaucracy'.⁵⁴ The department was primarily responsible for recording Cabinet proceedings, circulating memoranda to ministers, communicating decisions taken by the Cabinet to departments, and thus assisting in the implementation of the Cabinet's collective decisions. The Cabinet Office worked closely with the Prime Minister and its first head was both Secretary to the Cabinet and to the Committee of Imperial Defence.

Like the Treasury, the Home Office was a regulatory, rather than policymaking, department.⁵⁵ It oversaw issues including prosecutions, the police, prisons, the regulation of explosives, firearms, and drugs, as well as conditions of employment for children, and those working in factories, docks, and shops. It also bore responsibility for the affairs of Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands. The Permanent Under-Secretary was the principal advisor to the Home Secretary. Akin to the Home Office, the Foreign Office was a grand old 'Secretary of State' department with roots in the eighteenth century.⁵⁶ While the Foreign Secretary and Cabinet laid down foreign policy, a lot of brains, ears, hands, and tongues were needed to form the body of opinion upon which decisions could be made. The Foreign Office was primarily an intelligence department, where information was gathered and analysed before courses of action were recommended. 'Group consultation' manifested in civil servants minuting papers as they passed through the Foreign Office, with the most important matters reaching the Permanent Under-Secretary.⁵⁷ In the Permanent Under-Secretary's hands rested 'to a very large degree, the real control of the Foreign Office'; he was the Foreign Secretary's principal advisor and responsible for efficient administration.⁵⁸

1919-1946 was a distinct phase in the history of Whitehall. The elite Civil Service was markedly different compared to before the war. For instance, the introduction of the post of Head of the Civil Service, the reform of the Treasury into three branches, the amalgamation of the Foreign Office with the Diplomatic Service, and the creation of the Cabinet Office profoundly altered the dynamics and processes of central government.

⁵⁴ Hennessy, *Whitehall*, 389.

⁵⁵ TNA, T/169/16, Anderson's Evidence to Tomlin Commission, 9 December 1929.

⁵⁶ Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge [hereafter CAC], STRN/2/1, 'The Organisation and World of the Foreign Office at Home and the Foreign Service Abroad'; Lord Strang, *The Foreign Office* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1955), 17-19.

⁵⁷ CAC, VNST/II/4/1, 'The Foreign Office from Inside', Vansittart, *The Listener* (1939), 1351-1353.

⁵⁸ Donald G. Bishop, *The Administration of British Foreign Relations* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1974), 256.

Similarly, reform following the Second World War transformed the Civil Service during the early Cold War.⁵⁹

As well as marking a distinct phase in the history of Whitehall, the period 1919-1946 also marked the lifecycle of a generation of the Whitehall elite. In the immediate post-First World War period, leaders of the Edwardian Civil Service – including Charles Hardinge, Edward Troup, John Bradbury, and Robert Chambers – were replaced by those who, maturing into Permanent Secretaries during the interwar period, might be termed the ‘interwar generation’. The mandarins who dominated Whitehall between 1919 and 1946 belonged to a ‘generation unit’, whereby individuals interpreted events and endowed them with a particular shade of meaning common to the group.⁶⁰ This generation was born between 1877 and 1892. The group consisted of those who were born in the heady days of Victorian confidence, experienced the First World War from within Whitehall, and rose to dominant positions in the interwar Civil Service. These experiences and environment shaped and conditioned their mindsets and behaviours. They shared a generational outlook which might best be described as one of Georgian morbid anxiety, struggling in the years after the First World War to cope with the version of modernity confronting them.⁶¹ Their longevity within central government was driven in no small part by early promotions that marked them out from both their predecessors and successors. Their ascendancy was maintained until the end of the Second World War, when it was time for those of the ‘post-war vintage’ who had joined the Civil Service after the First World War to mature into the highest posts.⁶²

While intensive archival research forms the backbone of this research, published sources play an important role. Primary sources such as autobiographies and insider accounts must necessarily be carefully contextualised in light of skewed perspectives, as well as official censorship prior to publication. Oral testimony is also important; several leading historians have gifted subsequent generations their primary

⁵⁹ Edward Bridges, *The Treasury* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1964); FCO Historians, ‘The Permanent Under-Secretary of State: A Brief History of the Office and its Holders’, *History Notes*, 15 (2002), especially 23-30.

⁶⁰ Karl Mannheim, ‘The Problem of Generations’ in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, edited by Paul Kecskemeti (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), 276-320 (especially 290-312); Jane Pilcher, ‘Mannheim’s Sociology of Generations: An Undervalued Legacy’, *The British Journal of Sociology*, 45:3 (1994), 481-495 (486); Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979), 5.

⁶¹ Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain Between the Wars* (London: Allen Lane, 2009).

⁶² Bodleian Library, Oxford [hereafter Bodleian], MS. Eng. lett. c. 273, Anderson to Brook, 20 July 1956.

research materials, including irreplicable interviews with the governing elite.⁶³ These sources are predominantly used to contemplate how insiders sought to portray their world, while simultaneously protecting it. However, the Civil Service cannot be studied without wide-ranging research in both governmental and private collections.

The National Archives houses official records. Departmental files have been scoured for relevant memoranda, correspondence, and committee meeting minutes. These official records are dry and often so heavily ‘weeded’ that one historian posited that perhaps one percent of documentation is preserved.⁶⁴ Collections are nevertheless dauntingly vast, and the surplus of material is almost as much of a hindrance as a dearth. Moreover, even in the detail of dense departmental files, it is difficult to uncover operating methods and cultures. Of greater utility are private papers. Several collections are retained by family members; tracking ancestors and negotiating access to such materials can be a minefield. Thankfully, most private papers are preserved in open-access repositories. Draft memoirs, private and political correspondence, photographs, and diaries are a treasure trove, and the wealth of surviving evidence permits the reconstruction of the Whitehall elite’s world. It allows historians to trace networks, to elucidate cultures, and to study the intricacies of decision-making in both formal and informal arenas. Sources are like pieces of a jigsaw. Some pieces are missing, having been disposed of contemporaneously or else intentionally destroyed by officials who wished to conceal part, or all, of their lives. The solution is to cross-reference as many sources as possible.

Stemming from source limitations, some Permanent Secretaries appear in sharper focus than others, while some are necessarily relegated to supporting character roles. It is difficult, for instance, to study Edward Bridges. Much of the material pertaining to his work relates to his time as Permanent Secretary to the Treasury. He was a notoriously private person who deliberately enveloped the Civil Service in secrecy and burned his private papers.⁶⁵ Warren Fisher’s papers are similarly sparse and cast only scant light on his interests, personal life, or official work. Some, such as Richard Hopkins and Horace Wilson, elected not to leave a legacy of papers. Many collections, including those of Norman Brook and John Anderson, were thinned considerably before

⁶³ I am grateful to Eunan O’Halpin, Stephen Roskill, John Wheeler-Bennett, and especially Paul Addison.

⁶⁴ Lowe, *Official History*, 3.

⁶⁵ Chapman, *Ethics*, xv-xviii. Similarly, Vansittart destroyed material pertaining to the identities of his intelligence network, while Hankey lit a bonfire to burn confidential material, see CAC, ROSK/7/78, Roskill to Robin, 17 June 1967.

being deposited, sometimes to become no more than ephemera from a life well-lived. This self-effacement was deliberate and makes it difficult to rescue these individuals from being 'mere footnotes'.⁶⁶ In contrast, substantial collections bequeathed by the Cadogan, Vansittart, and Hankey families offer detailed insights. Hankey possessed the keenest eye for his material legacy; he ordered his office files into the 'Magnum Opus' series and is unique among Cabinet Secretaries for bequeathing such a wealth of sources.⁶⁷ The personal archives of Cadogan and Hankey collections are strikingly similar, from extensive correspondence to photographs lovingly preserved in scrapbooks, and (in)famous diaries. While Cadogan's diary spans thirty-five years from 1933, entries in Hankey's are infrequent beyond the early 'twenties. That neither was intended for publication adds to their value. They were vessels into which to pour emotions and confidences and are littered with unrestrained comments.⁶⁸ These diaries were necessarily subjective and therein lies their significance. Written without 'falsification' of memory, with 'thoughts and observations ... unsullied by that wisdom after the event which distorts ... judgement' and 'in keeping with the views, knowledge and conventions of contemporary opinion', these diaries reveal the inner workings of central government from an unparalleled perspective.⁶⁹

Case studies are used to dig into this dense source material. The selection of case studies is guided by the availability of multi-perspectival material around which to develop interpretations. Yet, case studies are more than simply *convenient* dig sites. They have been chosen to offer breadth and variety as regards chronology, policy questions, and the cast of characters. The case studies are also representative of the activities in which officials participated and which occupied their attention. Most importantly, the selection of examples is a deliberate effort to cast light on different facets of influence and culture.

⁶⁶ John Colville, *Footprints in Time* (London: Collins, 1976), 71.

⁶⁷ His term of endearment for the files of the Cabinet Secretary in TNA, CAB/63.

⁶⁸ CAC, ACAD/4/6, Cadogan to Woodward, 9 June 1956; Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets. Volume I* (London: Collins, 1970).

⁶⁹ Colville, *Footprints*, 67.

Structure

This thesis uses a thematic structure as the best means of developing analysis which is both collective and comparative in nature. The first chapter explores the ways in which mandarins were appointed to the highest offices and in so doing, challenges the Civil Service's projected self-image of the process. It reveals how power and influence were exercised and which actors ultimately controlled the promotions process. It particularly emphasises the prevalence of competition.

The second chapter examines the cultures and practices which prevailed at the top of Whitehall. It colourises the world inhabited by elite officials to better understand their behaviours and activities. Drawing on approaches including space, emotion, and language, it reveals how the giants of Whitehall were not a homogenous group, although heterogeneity was contained within narrow limits.

The third, fourth, and fifth chapters interrogate the central concepts of influence, agency, and networks in different dimensions. They illuminate collective influence and derivative influence and contemplate the dual forces of competition and collaboration between mandarins in the pursuit of goals. The third chapter focuses on obstructive influence through the case study of the Channel Tunnel question. It explores the ways in which mandarins could undermine their political masters by covertly working around them, as well as the significance of controlling flows of information and constructing expertise. The fourth chapter examines another policymaking example, the Defence Requirements Committee. It contrasts obstructive influence with constructive influence and demonstrates how officials found the latter far more difficult to wield. The fifth chapter expands the study of constructive influence beyond the policymaking arena and into largely administrative questions through the case study of the War Book.

Finally, the sixth chapter delves into dominant themes of networks, influence, and cultures from the often-neglected angle of post-Whitehall lives. It traces the fall of Permanent Secretaries and explores the extent to which ministers could interfere in the careers of elite officials. The chapter subsequently focuses on ex-officials' lives in retirement as Elder Statesmen during the 1940s and 1950s. After delving into ex-mandarins' attempts to influence the writing of contemporary history, it interrogates

how these Elder Statesmen also sought to exert influence on foreign policy from outside the Whitehall citadel during the Suez crisis of 1956.

Chapter One: Power and Promotions

... be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em.¹

This chapter sheds light on one of the most consequential aspects of Whitehall culture. It demythologises the process by which elite officials were elevated to the post of Permanent Secretary. This investigation queries if the Civil Service's self-image – repeatedly projected by insiders and subsequently reinforced by historians – accurately reflected common practice or was *escamotage*. Weighing the balance of power between the Prime Minister, departmental ministers, and elite mandarins in the promotions process cuts to the heart of debates surrounding the activities of the Head of the Civil Service and the extent to which officials' careers were free from political influence. This chapter reveals both the 'kingmakers' and the process of 'kingmaking' at the highest echelons of Whitehall.

Historians and political scientists have contemplated the theme of 'success' through various lenses. While biographers trace the steps of an individual's career and describe the personal qualities which they believe contributed to an official's promotion, they rarely unearth the complexities of, or extrapolate wider conclusions about, appointments at the very top. A notable exception is Eunan O'Halpin's biography of Warren Fisher, which offers broader and insightful connections.² Likewise, there have been numerous one-dimensional studies which merely regurgitate abstract principles, such as 'meritocracy' and 'fluidity' to explain promotions, without critical commentary or sufficient evidence.³ Peter Barberis's contributions on the appointments process are more nuanced and penetrating, in large part because Barberis studies a wide selection of officials and analyses trends and patterns in the promotions process.⁴ His work is a solid basis from which to develop understandings.

¹ William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, edited by Burton Raffel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), Act II, Scene V, 70.

² Eunan O'Halpin, *Head of the Civil Service: A Study of Sir Warren Fisher* (London: Routledge, 1989).

³ Including Peter Hennessy, *Whitehall* (London, Fontana, 1990), especially 74-75.

⁴ Peter Barberis, *The Elite of the Elite: Permanent Secretaries in the British Higher Civil Service* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1996).

Political scientists regularly rely on statistical analysis to discover why individuals were promoted through reference to a range of tabulated factors, including educational backgrounds. Thus far, such approaches have been unable to uncover sufficiently strong correlations to substantiate the claim that social background determined success at the highest levels, or that Permanent Secretaries trod similar paths to the top. Moreover, statistical analyses do not elucidate why only some of those from privileged backgrounds secured Permanent Secretaryships; statistics are ultimately better suited to illuminating the changing social composition of the Permanent Secretaries' "club" over time.⁵ Methodological flaws, including incomplete datasets and the difficulties of quantifying intangible notions such as class, further undermine the profitability of statistical approaches. There is also an unhelpful fixation with tracing the number of Permanent Secretaries who served as a private secretary. Certainly, this could be a critical encounter and revealed that a civil servant was perceived as a promising "high-flier". However, this tick-box exercise negates the central question of whether patronage subsequently influenced the latter stages of a career. The fixation also obscures investigation into whether there were more significant encounters between civil servants and politicians beyond the private secretary dynamic.

This chapter deviates from conventional methodologies to correct deficiencies in the scholarship and contest dominant interpretations. Archival-based, biographical case studies are used to compare the ways in which a wide range of elite officials were promoted. These findings are then compared to the Civil Service's projected self-image of the process. In an era before formal committees to select Permanent Secretaries and with personnel files largely withheld from the archives, the official record sheds scant light on why particular individuals were chosen, or the relative influence of those involved in decision-making. Promotions were frequently discussed in private conclave and reported in diaries or correspondence; it is primarily through these sources that the informal process is reconstructed. The chapter begins by outlining the official narrative. It discusses the principles and processes purported to underpin the selection of officials and offers an exemplar case study which reflected this self-image. The second and third sections contest the official narrative, which described a harmonious and meritocratic

⁵ R. K. Kelsall, 'The Social Background of the Higher Civil Service', *Political Quarterly*, 25:4 (1954), 382-389; R. K. Kelsall, *Higher Civil Servants in Britain: from 1870 to the Present Day* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955); Geoffrey Kingdon Fry, *Statesmen in Disguise: The Changing Role of the Administrative Class of the British Home Civil Service, 1853-1966* (London: Macmillan, 1969); Kevin Theakston and Geoffrey K. Fry, 'Britain's Administrative Elite: Permanent Secretaries 1900-1986', *Public Administration*, 67 (1989), 129-147.

system of appointments, free from political influence. The second section examines a case study of mandarins clashing as they competed to determine an appointment, while the third section underscores the centrality of political actors in deciding appointments.

The Head of the Civil Service and the Official Narrative

A Treasury minute in September 1919 announced that the newly appointed Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, Warren Fisher, would also be the Head of the Civil Service. In addition to his regular departmental duties, Fisher was bestowed with the constitutional responsibility to advise the Prime Minister on honours and senior appointments.⁶ Despite detractors' claims, neither the title nor the responsibilities were arrogated by Fisher; they were bestowed by ministers and inseparable from designs to strengthen the ascendancy of the Prime Minister at the apex of a centralised Civil Service.⁷ As criticism of the new system swelled, Fisher went to great lengths to point out that the title and functions of the Head of the Civil Service dated from 1867.⁸

Although Fisher now possessed the constitutional responsibility to advise on the most senior appointments, the Prime Minister's approval was required. The Head of the Civil Service's ability to successfully influence promotions therefore depended on his access to – and even control of – information, as well as the extent to which his relationships with premiers led them to trust his judgment. Fisher seized the opportunity presented to implement his vision of a unified and highly efficient Civil Service. To Fisher, the selection of elite officials was of paramount importance. Throughout his career, he maintained the fervent belief that muddle and inefficiency were the result of the 'absence of the right man in charge' and thus '*nothing* will go right *unless* crucial places are filled by the *right* men.'⁹ Fisher distrusted ministers' judgments in promotions, in part because of their inexperience, but also a 'natural tendency to

⁶ TNA, T/268/17, Minute, 4 September 1919; PREM/1/53, Fisher to Baldwin, 30 March 1926; T/215/421, Bridges to Beveridge, 7 November 1952.

⁷ John Naylor, *A Man and an Institution: Sir Maurice Hankey, the Cabinet Secretariat and the Custody of Cabinet Secrecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 71; Hennessy, *Whitehall*, 73.

⁸ For the extended debate on the originals of the 'Head of the Civil Service', see Maurice Wright, *Treasury Control of the Civil Service, 1854-1874* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 367-368; TNA, T/268/18, Maurice Headlam to the Editor of *The Times*, 28 September 1948; John Bradbury to Maurice Headlam, 1 December 1948; Bridges to Padmore, 18 December 1950.

⁹ Fisher's emphasis, Fisher Papers, Fisher to Lloyd George, 3 September 1919; TNA, CAB 21/902, Fisher to Prime Minister, 1 October 1938.

consider the feelings of the men high in his [the minister's] department'.¹⁰ In contrast, Fisher believed that he was the best individual to advise the Prime Minister on appointments as he possessed superior information and a clear understanding of what was required at the highest levels of the Civil Service. Fisher expounded at length on the principles and methods by which he advised on promotions during the Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service in 1930.¹¹ His immediate successors as Head of the Civil Service parroted identical accounts of promotions and valued the same characteristics.¹²

In this narrative, the Head of the Civil Service's recommendations were guided by the interlinked principles of 'generalist' administration, 'fluidity', and meritocracy. Fisher strongly believed that a Permanent Secretary need not be an expert in the department's work or have any 'prior contact' with the department before assuming its headship. Rather than detailed policy expertise, 'generalists' were therefore skilled in an abstract art of administration which could be applied equally well across departments. One of his successors, Norman Brook, described the 'generalist' as the man who knew 'how to *get things done*'.¹³ Fisher's preference for 'generalists' over 'experts' was inseparable from the principle of 'fluidity', which he conceptualised as 'musical chairs' and thereafter became part of the Whitehall idiolect.¹⁴ 'Fluidity' was to be instrumental in the creation of a unified and uniform Civil Service.¹⁵ 'Fluidity' was both the interchangeability of 'generalist' administrators between departments and the practice of taking the Civil Service, rather than an individual department, as the field of selection in promotions. It was founded on the belief that a change of surroundings was healthy for individuals – it 'keeps them alive' – and resulted in a stronger mandarin class as it challenged officials to rethink departmental mindsets, to adapt to change, and to flourish into 'generalists' rather than narrow 'experts'. Another of Fisher's successors, Edward Bridges, described how transferring officials between departments was like 'placing the members of a cricket eleven in a field in the way which will give the strongest result for the team as a whole'.¹⁶ 'Fluidity' was also closely bound to

¹⁰ Fisher Papers, Fisher to Lloyd George, 3 September 1919.

¹¹ TNA, T/169/18, Royal Commission on the Civil Service, Minutes of Evidence (Fisher), 17 December 1930.

¹² Edward Bridges, *Portrait of a Profession: The Civil Service Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 12.

¹³ Brook's emphasis, Bodleian, MS. Eng. misc. c. 489, Lecture to Imperial Defence College, 23 March 1960.

¹⁴ For example, CAC, PJGG/9/3/38, Lord McGowan to Grigg, 23 February 1942.

¹⁵ Andrew Blick and George Jones, *At Power's Elbow: Aides to the Prime Minister from Robert Walpole to David Cameron* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2013), 157.

¹⁶ Edward Bridges, *The Treasury* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1964), 176-177.

meritocratic promotion; to succeed, an individual had to be marked as the worthiest candidate across the Civil Service, not merely a department's heir apparent, thus raising the standard of competition.

Outlining the appointments process to the Tomlin Commission, Fisher described the 'completely informal arrangement' whereby names were 'canvassed' in private discussions with senior colleagues to reveal a 'trend of opinion' as to the suitability of individuals. According to Fisher, this system was so effective because the Civil Service was 'a whispering gallery. No outsider can add to what people in the Service know about one another.' Bridges revealed that five or six high officials were consulted in this way and always in private – sometimes at the Athenaeum club – so that they would share their indiscreet views with him.¹⁷ Given the relatively small size of the elite Civil Service in this period, their shared social and educational backgrounds, and years scaling the ladders of Whitehall alongside one another, this little band knew each other well.¹⁸

The Head of the Civil Service was thus the queen bee in a hive of human intelligence; Fisher described a knowledge network stretching across Whitehall in which he represented the hub of information-gathering and therefore the point of connection between the Civil Service and the Prime Minister. Although this informal web was a vital resource underpinning Fisher's position, monopolising information was very difficult. Politicians developed their own judgments of officials and were neither wholly dependent on Fisher's observations, and nor did they always concur with the traits which Fisher prioritised. After canvassing colleagues, the Head of the Civil Service submitted a recommendation to the Prime Minister, who could either accept the nominee or appoint a different individual of his choice. Fisher and his successors always maintained, truthfully, that they possessed no 'independent authority', only 'status' in the process, and that the 'Prime Minister ... can, and sometimes does, reject' the advice.¹⁹ It was only in the 1960s under William Armstrong that this system was reformed with the creation of a Senior Appointments Selection Committee for more formal and transparent promotions.

Four key characteristics can be distilled from this 'official narrative'. Firstly, despite the informality, the process was well-ordered and functioned smoothly.

¹⁷ Bridges, *Treasury*, 176-177.

¹⁸ Richard Chapman, *Ethics in the British Civil Service* (London: Routledge, 1988), 54-62.

¹⁹ TNA, PREM/1/53, Fisher to Baldwin, 30 March 1926; *The Manchester Guardian*, 28 November 1942; T/215/421, Bridges to Beveridge, 7 November 1952.

Secondly, the system depended not on nepotism or connections but on meritocracy, thus ensuring that the very best candidates were chosen. Thirdly, there was cordiality and collegiality within Whitehall so that the elite Civil Service reached a harmonious consensus as to the best candidate, who was the natural and uncontested choice for the vacancy. Fourthly, that the poles around which the promotions process turned were the Head of the Civil Service and the Prime Minister. It was to this axis that attention was repeatedly drawn, with other actors pushed to the side-lines. Most curiously, and tellingly, despite Fisher, Bridges, and other insiders repeating this account of the promotions process, when asked by a foreign government for information on the practice, Bridges became very coy and bizarrely demurred that to reveal such secrets would cause 'embarrassment'. This strongly suggests that the published statements and documents deliberately concealed aspects of the working of Whitehall.²⁰ At times, the mask began to slip – but only in private. When pressed on the intricacies of the system by a fellow insider, Norman Brook conceded that the process was not always uniform and that ministers could play a vital role, especially in an intra-departmental promotion.²¹

The 'official narrative' was how the Civil Service wished to be understood by those outside the citadel and how it deflected criticism. Nevertheless, opponents repeatedly attacked the system, disputing both the Head of the Civil Service's right to advise and the value of his counsel. In a series of particularly stimulating parliamentary debates in 1926, one critic challenged the one-dimensional narrative of appointments, asking whether the Prime Minister consulted his ministers on their favoured candidates, and whether the Head of the Civil Service's advice would override the preferences of a minister.²² The backbencher raised the fear that 'subordinates should be made masters' and the 'independent authority of Ministers and of Parliament should be impaired' in allowing the Head of the Civil Service to advise on appointments.²³ Sidney Webb, on the Labour benches and speaking with great authority as a Professor of Public Administration, admitted that the position of the Head of the Civil Service was 'open to criticism'. Yet Webb could offer no 'practical alternative' as he believed it to be 'a great advantage' that a minister should not decide the appointment of a permanent head. Speaking as a former premier who had been responsible for Fisher's appointment, David Lloyd George defended the system and agreed that the Prime Minister required an

²⁰ TNA, T/215/421, Bridges's 'Note for Record', 31 July 1953.

²¹ TNA, T/215/421, Brook to Mallaby, 11 July 1957.

²² Hansard, House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series, vol. 192, cc. 518-520, 24 February 1926.

²³ Hansard, House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series, vol. 194, cc. 289-334, 14 April 1926.

adviser 'who knows the Civil Service thoroughly'. Such debates helped to shape and reinforce the mindset that the Head of the Civil Service played a substantial role in the promotions process and could influence the Prime Minister to approve a preferred candidate.

Analogous criticisms surrounding the Head of the Civil Service reignited in the 1940s and 1950s and will be discussed in greater detail in the final chapter. Moreover, Fisher's death in 1948 brought to the fore debates surrounding his time in Whitehall. Questions arose as to whether Fisher had possessed a veto on a promotion if he disagreed with a candidate supported by the Prime Minister; the extent to which falling out of favour with Fisher had arrested the careers of promising officials; and with whom the Prime Minister would side if a minister refused to accept Fisher's chosen candidate.²⁴ These were some of the most penetrating observations on the Civil Service's narrative of decision-making and represent excellent starting points in unravelling myths.

Dominant interpretations in the historiography emphasise the Head of the Civil Service's influence in appointments. Leading scholars, including Peter Hennessy, Geoffrey Fry, Kevin Theakston, George Jones, and Andrew Blick stress Fisher's importance and claim that the Prime Minister rarely rejected his recommendations.²⁵ Akin to Sidney Webb, Hennessy argues that politicians should not bear responsibility for appointments as they are too prejudiced and partisan; Hennessy also denies that there was 'systematic' political influence in an individual's career and asserts that the promotions process was 'free from political patronage'.²⁶ Equally confident, Fry states that the Head of the Civil Service possessed the greatest authority and contends that neither 'the Prime Minister or [ministers] ... would have had the time or perhaps even the interest to challenge seriously the views ... put forward by a man at the head of a unified career profession'.²⁷ Similarly, in a searing indictment of 'bureaucracy', Thomas Balogh claims that the role of Head of the Civil Service bestowed on Fisher power

²⁴ TNA, T/268/18, John Filmer and Maurice Headlam correspondence, 20 October 1948.

²⁵ Blick and Jones, *At Power's Elbow*, 156; Andrew Blick, *People Who Live in the Dark* (London: Politico's Publishing, 2004), 37; Kevin Theakston, *Leadership in Whitehall* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 58.

²⁶ Hennessy, *The Hidden Wiring: Unearthing the British Constitution* (London: Indigo, 1996), 132; Hennessy, *Whitehall*, 74-75; his conclusions were derived from *Top Jobs in Whitehall: Appointments and Promotions in the Senior Civil Service* (London: Royal Institute of Public Administration, 1987), 13-15.

²⁷ Fry, *Statesmen in Disguise*, 56.

'beyond the wildest dreams'.²⁸ Contemporaries, historians, and political scientists have perpetuated the official narrative, rarely offering evidence to support their claims.²⁹ Even those who have implied that ministers were more powerful in the equation than they first appeared have taken pains to stress that any differences arising over appointments were settled with harmonious, 'friendly discussion at No. 10'.³⁰ A minority of historians have suggested that the Head of the Civil Service was not always particularly important in the process, including Eunan O'Halpin and Richard Chapman.³¹ However, neither Chapman nor O'Halpin fleshes out competing elements in the system or conceptualises the promotions process.

Moreover, a substantial proportion of the literature on promotions fixates on the merits and flaws of 'fluidity' and 'generalist' administration. This obsession stems from political and cultural debates rooted in the mid-twentieth century as national decline and successive crises nurtured serious concerns as to whether the Civil Service was adequately equipped to grapple with the challenges ahead. These anxieties manifested in reforms to reskill the profession and promote 'specialists' (often from a mathematical, scientific, or economics background) over 'generalists' (largely drawn from the arts and humanities). In light of these debates and reforms, commentators and scholars have questioned whether the first half of the twentieth century was a missed opportunity to promote a different form of talent within Whitehall.³²

However, one should begin by acknowledging that the collaborative and harmonious system projected by Whitehall was not wholly mythical, as demonstrated by the promotion of John Anderson to Permanent Under-Secretary of the Home Office in 1922. A prodigious student and a product of the Scottish education system, Anderson was unusual among the Whitehall elite in having studied the sciences. Eager to marry and settle, Anderson was drawn to the stability of the Civil Service; he entered the Colonial Office in 1905, having achieved the second-highest entrance examination score on record.³³ Anderson's talents were soon recognised. In 1906, the Secretary of State for the Colonies wished to appoint him directly as Permanent Secretary because Anderson

²⁸ Thomas Balogh, 'The Apotheosis of the Dilettante: The Establishment of Mandarins', in *The Establishment*, edited by Hugh Thomas (London: Anthony Blond, 1959), 83-126 (87).

²⁹ For example, Cato, *Guilty Men* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1940), 86-90; P.J. Grigg, *Prejudice and Judgment* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1948), 51-52; CAC, ATLE/2/5, 'Appointments'; OHPN/1, Padmore to O'Halpin, 21 June 1982.

³⁰ Herbert Morrison, *Government and Parliament: A Survey From the Inside* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 326-327.

³¹ O'Halpin, *Head of the Civil Service*, 135; Chapman, *Ethics*, 82.

³² Succinctly summarised in Hennessy, *Whitehall*, 10-11; 73.

³³ John Wheeler-Bennett, *John Anderson: Viscount Waverley* (London: Macmillan, 1962), 17.

was popular among statesmen and had already distinguished himself as a 'quick worker ... able to make up his mind and express it – a most essential quality for the post'. Aged just 24, Anderson's appointment would have been shocking.³⁴ Nevertheless, Anderson was given increasingly prominent stages upon which to showcase his talents. He was attached in 1912 to the National Insurance Commission alongside a 'galaxy of stars', including Warren Fisher and Alexander Maxwell (future Permanent Under-Secretary at the Home Office).³⁵ At the Commission, Anderson provided 'calm and sagacious support' when counselling his superiors and developed an air of authority.³⁶ He excelled and was appointed as Secretary to the Commission ahead of senior colleagues. During the First World War, Anderson was moved to the new Ministry of Shipping in 1917 and then in 1919 to the new Ministry of Health to assist in erecting machinery of government.³⁷ Mere months later, Anderson was promoted to Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue; this sinecure was a mark of particular distinction.³⁸ However, this was another short-lived appointment. In May 1920, Fisher dispatched Anderson to Dublin Castle – the seat of British administration in Ireland – to grapple with the crumbling machinery. Over the next two years, Lloyd George and Fisher observed Anderson inject dynamism into the machinery of government and devise solutions to complex problems.³⁹

Aged just 39, Anderson returned from Ireland in February 1922 with a towering reputation.⁴⁰ The sitting Permanent Under-Secretary of the Home Office, Edward Troup, was retiring and Fisher nominated Anderson as his successor. As Fisher told Lloyd George, no other candidate could match 'Anderson's calibre'.⁴¹ Given the department's deep involvement in Irish affairs, there may have also been a question of policy expertise.⁴² Moreover, Fisher deliberately sought a mandarin who was skilled in administration and reform because he hoped that Anderson would end the Home Office's 'masterly inactivity' and inject 'fresh blood' into an institution 'which still lingers

³⁴ British Library, London [hereafter BL], Add. MS 52515, ff. 111-114, Elgin to Campbell-Bannerman, 11 December 1906.

³⁵ Wheeler-Bennett, *Waverley*, 31-32; Bridges, *Portrait of a Profession*, 11-12.

³⁶ Henry N. Bunbury (ed.), *Lloyd George's Ambulance Wagon: Being the Memoirs of William J. Braithwaite, 1911-1912* (London: Meuthen and Co., 1957), 36-7; 281; R.W. Harris, *Not So Humdrum: The Autobiography of a Civil Servant* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1939), 174-175; Arthur Salter, *Memoirs of a Public Servant* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), 59.

³⁷ TNA, HO/45/24759, Personnel File.

³⁸ Wheeler-Bennett, *Waverley*, 45.

³⁹ Edward Bridges, 'John Anderson, Viscount Waverley, 1882-1958', *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society*, 4 (1958), 306-325 (308-310); Parliamentary Archives, London [hereafter PA], LG/F/17/1; CRL, AC/25/4/15-16, Fisher to Chamberlain, 7 and 15 May 1920; AC/31/2/3, Anderson to Chamberlain, 18 June 1921.

⁴⁰ TNA, HO/45/24759, Lord Chancellor to Anderson, 12 March 1922.

⁴¹ PA, LG/F/17/1/13, Fisher to Lloyd George, 9 February 1922.

⁴² TNA, HO/45/24759, Anderson to Macready, 14 March 1922.

in mid-Victorian days'.⁴³ It was common knowledge within Whitehall that a good 'duster' was needed to 'remove some of the ancient barnacles that still adhere to the walls of that distinguished Government Office'.⁴⁴ Having witnessed Anderson's talents first-hand, Lloyd George approved of the Head of the Civil Service's candidate. He instructed Fisher to discuss the appointment with the Home Secretary, Edward Shortt, at which point Fisher discovered that the Home Secretary had a different candidate in mind – Ernley Blackwell, a Home Office official whom Shortt trumpeted as the best individual within the department.⁴⁵ Both Shortt and Troup initially favoured an internal promotion as they had 'adequate' men in the Home Office and worried that the introduction of an outsider would 'shock' the department.⁴⁶ O'Halpin asserts that Fisher succeeded in promoting his candidate because he lobbied Lloyd George, but this is unrepresentative.⁴⁷ It was instead Shortt's mind which Fisher cultivated, steering the Home Secretary to accept the principle that the field of choice must be the whole Civil Service. Shortt thus decided not to contest the appointment, recognising that 'if none of his local geese were acceptable', Anderson was the man whom he himself would select from beyond the walls of the Home Office.⁴⁸

Anderson's appointment demonstrates the application of principles of meritocratic promotion and 'fluidity'. It is also an excellent example of harmonious, collaborative relations, in which the Head of the Civil Service, the Prime Minister, and the departmental minister amicably agreed on the most suitable candidate. This process was replicated in the appointments of Robert Russell Scott to the Home Office in 1932 and Norman Brook to the Treasury in 1956.⁴⁹ However, few appointments were made on such harmonious terms, perhaps reflecting Anderson's stature within the Civil Service. It might also reflect Shortt's relative weakness and preoccupation with other matters. Furthermore, Anderson's promotion touches on a recurrent theme: the tension between hierarchies and networks. Rigid hierarchical rankings reigned supreme when the candidate was the heir apparent within a given department. Anderson's promotion points to the dominance of the network over the hierarchy; strongly embedded within political and official networks, he also developed excellent working relations with those

⁴³ PA, LG/F/17/1/13, Fisher to Lloyd George, 9 February 1922; LG/F/17/1/15, Fisher to Frances Stevenson, undated.

⁴⁴ TNA, HO/45/24759, Macready to Anderson, 13 March 1922.

⁴⁵ PA, LG/F/17/1/13, Fisher to Lloyd George, 9 February 1922.

⁴⁶ PA, LG/F/17/1/15, Fisher to Frances Stevenson, undated.

⁴⁷ O'Halpin, *Head of the Civil Service*, 71-73.

⁴⁸ PA, LG/F/17/1/13, Fisher to Lloyd George, 9 February 1922.

⁴⁹ For instance, Bodleian, MS. Eng. lett. c. 273, Bridges to Brook, 23 October 1956.

who occupied vital nodes in the system – in this instance, both the Head of the Civil Service and the Prime Minister.

Discordant Mandarins

The official narrative did not account for the contingency whereby mandarins competed, rather than cooperated, to nominate a candidate for promotion. Edward Bridges's promotion to Cabinet Secretary in 1938 exemplifies how an influential, motivated predecessor challenged the Head of the Civil Service's right to recommend a candidate. Maurice Hankey occupied a position within central government unparalleled by any other official, including Fisher, for over two decades. Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) from 1912, Hankey continued to serve in this role after his appointment as first Cabinet Secretary in 1916; in 1923, he added to these heavy duties when he assumed the role of Clerk of the Privy Council. In April 1938, Hankey informed the Prime Minister of his intention to retire. As the architect and only head of the Cabinet Office, Hankey was assertive in the search for his successor and championed his own candidate in opposition to Fisher's.

Hankey hoped that a single individual would continue to serve as both Secretary to the Cabinet and the CID as the posts were complementary and interconnected.⁵⁰ Hankey also hoped to increase the likelihood that an individual from the Fighting Services would be appointed, just as Hankey had been, because a civilian might struggle with the work of the CID. As he prepared for retirement, Hankey brought Hastings Ismay back to the Cabinet Office in 1936 to train him as his successor.⁵¹ Yet in May 1938, Hankey approached Ismay to gauge his interest and discovered that Ismay was unwilling to perform the dual role; he wished to serve only as Secretary to the CID.⁵² Hankey turned to his second candidate, Henry Pownall (Deputy Secretary to the CID until 1936).⁵³ Upon hearing Hankey's warning that the 'Services will lose the post since ... Fisher was ... pressing for ... a civilian', Pownall reluctantly acquiesced to his name being put forward but very much doubted '(and so does Hankey) whether [the post] ...

⁵⁰ Hastings Ismay, *The Memoirs of General the Lord Ismay* (London: Heinemann, 1960), 88.

⁵¹ 13 January 1936 in Brian Bond (ed.), *Chief of Staff: The Diaries of Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Pownall. Volume I, 1933-1940* (London: Leo Cooper, 1972), 97-98; Ronald Wingate, *Lord Ismay: A Biography* (London: Hutchinson, 1970), 30.

⁵² CAC, HNKY/1/8, 6 May 1938; Ismay, *Memoirs*, 88-89.

⁵³ CAC, HNKY/1/8, 7 May 1938.

can be held for the Services'.⁵⁴ Hankey was thus forced to back two lame horses. He sought political support to strengthen his hand, lobbying the Minister for Coordination of Defence and the Chiefs of Staff on the crucial principle that the appointee should be drawn from the Services. All concurred that they required 'a service officer who knew the ropes' and 'a Secretary who speaks our language'.⁵⁵

In contrast, Fisher favoured Edward Bridges, a talented Treasury official. Born to a privileged family, Bridges attended Eton as an Oppidan and secured a First in *Literae Humaniores* at Magdalen College, Oxford.⁵⁶ His aspiration to read History was interrupted by the Great War, which dramatically re-shaped his career.⁵⁷ Bridges served as a junior officer on the Western Front until 1917, when a bullet shattered his arm. Aware of Bridges's attainments at Oxford, Treasury officials requested that the War Office release him for secondment during his convalescence, and subsequently requested that he continue working in the Treasury even after he was passed fit for active service.⁵⁸ At the end of the war, Bridges sat the Civil Service Reconstruction examination, yet his superiors agreed that Bridges 'showed such special aptitude and promise' that he should be admitted to the Treasury even before the results were known.⁵⁹ Bridges's presence on interdepartmental committees and his service as Secretary to Royal Commissions throughout the 1920s instilled in him an understanding of the cogs in the central machinery of government and experience in drafting. His superiors sent effusive commendations to Fisher, acquainting him with Bridges's talents.⁶⁰ Between 1934 and 1938, Bridges was drawn into rearmament policy as head of the Treasury divisions which dealt with expenditure in the armed forces and this role brought him into close contact with the Fighting Services.⁶¹ He was thus a civil servant who could bridge the work of both the Cabinet and CID, and spoke the language of the Chiefs of Staff. This quality neutralised Hankey's insistence that his successor must be drawn from the Fighting Services. Furthermore, one of Bridges's duties was to brief the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Neville Chamberlain; Chamberlain thus possessed first-

⁵⁴ 2 May 1938 in Bond (ed.), *Pownall Diary. Volume I*, 144-145.

⁵⁵ CAC, HNKY/1/8, 9 and 10 May 1938.

⁵⁶ Commonly known as 'Greats', a rigorous classics course.

⁵⁷ John Winniffrith, 'Edward Ettingdean Bridges - Baron Bridges, 1892-1969', *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society*, 16 (1970), 38-56 (39).

⁵⁸ TNA, T/268/21, Treasury to War Office, 28 November 1917 and 12 August 1918.

⁵⁹ TNA, T/268/21, Letter from Ramsay, 6 November 1919.

⁶⁰ TNA, T/268/21, Fisher's minutes, 12 February 1921 and 2 October 1922; Crowe to Fisher, 29 November 1924; Tomlin to Fisher, July 1931.

⁶¹ Chapman, *Ethics*, 8.

hand experience of Bridges's merits and believed him to be a 'man of exceptional ability and brilliance and possessing attractive personal qualities.'⁶²

Situating Fisher's choice of Bridges within the broader principle of 'fluidity' exposes how historians have misread motivations. Fisher's biographer has claimed that Bridges's appointment was a cunning scheme to fuse the Cabinet Office with the Treasury – a last hurrah in Fisher's abortive effort to seize control of the Cabinet Office in 1922, absorb it into the Treasury, and strangle the new institution in its cot.⁶³ Interpreted so, the selection of Bridges is read as a power grab to strengthen Fisher's position. However, this preoccupation with institutional rivalries misinterprets Fisher's motives. Fisher deliberately proposed a candidate drawn from the Civil Service rather than the Fighting Services. As in the case of Anderson's appointment to the Home Office, he thought it imperative to inject new blood into the Cabinet Office after twenty-two years under one chief. Moreover, rather than permit the Cabinet Office to remain the insular preserve of the Fighting Services, Fisher sought to extend Civil Service uniformity. He was to attempt to penetrate a similar 'Chinese wall' around the Foreign Office, albeit with less success. Hankey also recognised the battle over his successor as one which would determine the relative independence of the Cabinet Office from the rest of the Civil Service; it was 'a soldier against a civil servant'.⁶⁴

Fisher and Horace Wilson spearheaded opposition to Hankey's candidates. For nearly fifteen years, the relationship between Fisher and Chamberlain bubbled with warmth and intimacy, before rupturing over the Munich crisis in September 1938.⁶⁵ However, it appears that Chamberlain was wary of Fisher prior to this; contemporaries detected friction in Chamberlain's derogatory comments on Fisher's judgement during discussions about Hankey's successor.⁶⁶ Moreover, Horace Wilson's participation in the search for Hankey's successor suggests that Chamberlain did not wholly trust Fisher. Wilson had been seconded to No. 10 Downing Street as the Prime Minister's chief advisor; he was widely recognised as Chamberlain's loyal lieutenant, confidant, and even henchman.⁶⁷ His participation in the appointments process may also imply that Chamberlain was already considering him as Fisher's successor as Head of the Civil Service. During several weeks in the spring of 1938, Fisher and Wilson conspired to

⁶² Winnifrith, 'Edward Bridges', 43; Theakston, *Leadership in Whitehall*, 71.

⁶³ O'Halpin, *Head of the Civil Service*, 71-73; Naylor, *A Man and an Institution*, 99.

⁶⁴ CAC, HNKY/1/8, 11 May 1938.

⁶⁵ Their relationship is further explored in later chapters.

⁶⁶ CAC, HNKY/1/8, 16 May 1938, Thomas Inskip's comments.

⁶⁷ This relationship is also explored in a later chapter.

secure Hankey's support for Bridges's nomination.⁶⁸ On an occasion which Hankey later described as 'a bluff and a blackmail', Wilson's mask of polite humour slipped.⁶⁹ Wilson claimed that the Prime Minister was 'annoyed' that Hankey 'was taking action in military circles to arouse opposition' to the selection of a civilian. Wilson also threatened that Chamberlain would withhold the gift of the Suez Canal Directorship, a sinecure intended for Hankey's retirement, unless he ceased his activities. Hankey stood firm and was cheered when King George VI confided to Hankey during an audience that he, too, supported Hankey's candidate.

When Hankey refused to accept Fisher's recommendation, the Prime Minister was forced to adjudicate. Hankey and Chamberlain discussed the impasse.⁷⁰ The Cabinet Secretary stressed the merits of Ismay and Pownall, and a Fighting Services candidate more broadly. Chamberlain listened sympathetically and promised to devise a compromise solution. The Prime Minister's conciliatory manner might be explained by the political necessity of being seen to address the concerns of important actors – including the Chiefs of Staff – and a degree of deference to Hankey's vast experience. Conciliation and compromise were fundamental to Chamberlain's activities, most famously in foreign policy. They were also the defining characteristics of Wilson's past work in industrial relations.⁷¹ Chamberlain outlined a vague solution to his lieutenant, and Wilson subsequently crafted the detail of the compromise 'to carry out what is in your [Chamberlain's] mind'.⁷² The statement was shown to Fisher, who agreed. The compromise entailed appointing Bridges as Secretary to the Cabinet and head of the Cabinet Office, alongside Rupert Howorth as Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet and Clerk of the Privy Council, and Hastings Ismay as Secretary to the CID. The essence of binding the posts was thus honoured to a degree, as was Hankey's inviolable principle that a military man must serve the CID. Hankey accepted the formula and elected to spin his defeat as a victory. He contented himself with the knowledge that 'Bridges is a perfectly delightful creature ... modest; sound on all questions and knowledgeable'.⁷³

⁶⁸ TNA, PREM/5/160, Wilson to Fisher, 25 April 1938.

⁶⁹ CAC, HNKY/1/8, 16 May 1938.

⁷⁰ CAC, HNKY/1/8, 18 May 1938; HNKY/8/36, Hankey to Chamberlain and enclosure, 9 May 1938; 'Notes used in conversation with PM', 18 May 1938'.

⁷¹ Rodney Lowe and Richard Roberts, 'Sir Horace Wilson, 1900-1935: The Making of a Mandarin', *The Historical Journal*, 30:3 (1987), 641-662 (647); see also, Frank A. Norman, *Whitehall to West Indies* (London: The Bodley Head, 1952), 84-85.

⁷² TNA, T/273/74, Wilson to Chamberlain, 18 May 1938.

⁷³ CAC, HNKY/3/43, Hankey to Robin, 21 May 1938.

Hankey's political support and his clout as an official regarded as part of the institutional fabric of the Cabinet Office had helped to secure a limited role for a military appointee. However, Bridges's promotion was a victory for 'fluidity' and for co-opting the Cabinet Office more closely into the uniformity of the Civil Service. Most significantly, Bridges's appointment illustrates the fallacy of the narrative of consensus and harmony in Whitehall in support of an unanimously approved candidate. Elite mandarins possessed divergent views as to which traits qualified an official for a vacancy, resulting in competition to secure the post for their preferred candidate. Moreover, this case study demonstrates that there were other, sometimes more important, mandarin actors in the equation than just the Head of the Civil Service.

Ministerial Power

Contrary to the Civil Service's projected self-image, the Head of the Civil Service did not always play a very significant role in appointments and nor was the process harmonious. Moreover, in many cases, politicians opposed Fisher's nominee and secure the promotion of their preferred candidate. On the cusp of retirement, Fisher claimed to have been 'defeated in the selection of men'.⁷⁴ As one of the few scholars to acknowledge the limitations on Fisher's influence, Barberis rightly cautions against over-exaggerating mandarins' patronage powers.⁷⁵ Whitehall was not a monolithic entity, governed by identical practices at all levels. In attempting to influence appointments in the most important and central departments, Heads of the Civil Service had to contend with the most powerful ministers, and acute prime ministerial interest. H.R.G. Greaves is correct to assert that the Head of the Civil Service was often 'at a disadvantage'.⁷⁶ Eight appointments demonstrate this dynamic, refracted in different dimensions: Fisher, Eyre Crowe, William Tyrrell, Robert Vansittart, Alexander Maxwell, Alexander Cadogan, Horace Wilson, and Richard Hopkins. These case studies illuminate the power balance within the central state and demonstrate the difficulties encountered in leveraging resources to secure outcomes. Furthermore, unravelling the logic of these appointments reveals the significance of networks and interactions between politicians and officials beyond the traditional minister-private secretary relationship.

⁷⁴ Fisher Papers, Fisher to Wilson, 15 May 1939.

⁷⁵ Barberis, *Elite of the Elite*, 63; 122-123.

⁷⁶ H.R.G. Greaves, *The Civil Service in the Changing State* (London: George G. Harrap, 1947), 173-174.

Warren Fisher's own appointment was instigated, and decided, entirely by political actors. He was deeply embedded within political networks, and it is only by illuminating these connections that his promotion can be understood. No great intellect, Fisher did not have a promising start to his Civil Service career.⁷⁷ Fisher's prospects only improved when he caught the eye of Robert Chalmers, Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue. Chalmers appointed Fisher as his Private Secretary in 1908.⁷⁸ Then, in 1912 came a defining moment in Fisher's career when he was chosen by Lloyd George to join the National Insurance Commission. Fisher was 'invaluable' on the Commission and so efficient that he became 'the man for push and go ... the man to get things done'.⁷⁹ It was the combination of Fisher's work on the Commission, his growing reputation, and his close relationship with Chalmers – who he expertly flattered – which secured his promotion to Commissioner at the Inland Revenue in 1913, and then Deputy Chairman in 1914.⁸⁰ During the First World War, Fisher's work to support increased demands on taxation structures attracted the attention of politicians, including Andrew Bonar Law and Stanley Baldwin at the Treasury.⁸¹ In 1918, aged just 38, he was elevated to the highly-coveted position of Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue.

Fisher's promotion a year later to Permanent Secretary to the Treasury was surprising. Kevin Theakston and George Peden attribute Fisher's appointment to Lloyd George, who had undoubtedly been impressed with Fisher's work on the National Insurance Commission and the Board of Inland Revenue.⁸² However, the evidence reveals that while Lloyd George supported the appointment, he did not instigate it, and nor did the impetus arise from within the Civil Service. When John Bradbury, Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, discussed the matter with Austen Chamberlain (Chancellor of the Exchequer), Bradbury conceded that 'introducing new blood' might be possible, yet ultimately wished to retain the post for himself.⁸³ O'Halpin draws attention to the meetings of the Cabinet Committee on Finance in the summer of 1919 and states that this committee sanctioned Fisher's appointment.⁸⁴ This is not entirely accurate. The minutes merely detail schemes for Treasury reorganisation and the dispatch of

⁷⁷ TNA, T/268/17, Personnel File.

⁷⁸ Fisher Papers, Draft Memoir.

⁷⁹ Bunbury (ed.), *Lloyd George's Ambulance Wagon*, 293-304.

⁸⁰ Bunbury (ed.), *Lloyd George's Ambulance Wagon*, 304.

⁸¹ O'Halpin, *Head of the Civil Service*, 20.

⁸² Theakston, *Leadership in Whitehall*, 42; George Peden, *The Treasury and British Public Policy, 1906-1959* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 138-139.

⁸³ CRL, AC/24/1/21, Bradbury to Chamberlain, 19 August 1919.

⁸⁴ O'Halpin, *Head of the Civil Service*, 31.

Bradbury to Paris to represent HMG on reparations matters.⁸⁵ The question of Bradbury's successor was not discussed at the committee meeting on 20 August 1919. It was the following day that Bonar Law (Lord Privy Seal) wrote to Lloyd George, who had been present at the meeting, informing the Prime Minister of the plan to appoint Fisher, and seeking the Prime Minister's approval.⁸⁶ Treasury staff were unimpressed with what they perceived as a deliberate attack on the institution's pride and privilege to reform the Whitehall order.⁸⁷

Unlike Fisher, Eyre Crowe's promotion to Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office was not preceded by a meteoric rise. Crowe overcame a range of social and educational disadvantages to enter the Foreign Office in 1885 after coming second in the entrance examination.⁸⁸ Well-respected for his administrative skill and policy experience, he was considered for the post of Permanent Under-Secretary in 1914. However, Crowe was side-lined into economic, rather than political, work during the First World War, and attacks against his German heritage contributed to his declining fortunes. He was restored to a leading position within the Foreign Office in 1918 when he won the support of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Robert Cecil, and the Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, who appointed Crowe as Assistant Under-Secretary for the new Middle Eastern Department.⁸⁹ Crowe's fortunes were further buoyed when he was assigned to the British Empire Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference, and from September 1919, he led the entire delegation. His work in Paris brought him favourably to the attention of Lord Curzon, the newly appointed Foreign Secretary. Crowe's relations with Lloyd George, however, were frequently strained.⁹⁰ The importance of the Foreign Secretary's support was clear when Lloyd George demanded Crowe's recall from Paris and Curzon successfully defended his official from criticism.⁹¹

Crowe owed his promotion to Permanent Under-Secretary in November 1920 to Curzon, rather than the Prime Minister, the Head of the Civil Service, or his predecessor, Charles Hardinge. Hardinge disliked Crowe and repeatedly sought to

⁸⁵ TNA, CAB/27/7, Minutes of Cabinet Committee on Finance, 20 August and 22 September 1919.

⁸⁶ PA, LG/F/31/1/4, Bonar Law to Lloyd George, 21 August 1919.

⁸⁷ Theakston, *Leadership in Whitehall*, 48.

⁸⁸ Bodleian, MS. Eng. c. 6035, Crowe's 1885 test results; Sibyl Crowe and Edward Corp, *Our Ablest Public Servant: Sir Eyre Crowe, 1864-1925* (Braunton: Merlin Books, 1993), 1-27.

⁸⁹ Ephraim Maisel, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1919-1926* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1994), 47; TNA, FO/800/198, f. 195, Cecil to Hardinge, 21 August 1918.

⁹⁰ Bodleian, MS. Eng. e. 3024, Crowe to Clema, 1 April 1919; PA, LG/F/11/6/1, Lloyd George to Crowe, 1919.

⁹¹ Bodleian, MS. Eng. d. 2905, Crowe to Clema, 19 December 1919; PA, LG/F/12/2/11, Lloyd George to Curzon, 10 December 1919.

undermine his position in the Foreign Office.⁹² Curzon and Hardinge, both ex-Viceroy of India, detested each other.⁹³ In the summer of 1920, Curzon succeeded in 'kicking' Hardinge up to the Paris Embassy, leaving the Permanent Under-Secretary post vacant.⁹⁴ Curzon also used his powers as Foreign Secretary to send Ronald Graham (Hardinge's preferred choice of successor) abroad and force Louis Mallet to retire, thus ensuring a clear field of promotion for Crowe.⁹⁵ Curzon refused to brook any interference from Fisher or the Treasury in the appointment of the Permanent Under-Secretary.⁹⁶ Curzon held strong views on the post of Head of the Civil Service and firmly defended that 'if a man is fit to be appointed ... head of any ... department of state, he must be considered competent to decide who shall fill the higher posts' in his department.⁹⁷ Curzon hoped to work with Crowe to stave off the worst prime ministerial incursions into the Foreign Office's authority, and Crowe's appointment was designed to reassert the department in policy-making and diplomacy.⁹⁸ Lloyd George disliked Crowe and, to add insult to injury, Crowe was the preferred candidate of a Foreign Secretary with whom Lloyd George shared a fractious relationship.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, Lloyd George reluctantly acquiesced to the appointment. In contrast to the official narrative of harmony and consensus, Crowe's appointment was marked by competition and conflict. Crowe benefited from the meritocratic structures which brought him to the attention of those who mattered. Yet his appointment was not free from political influence; he owed his promotion to the Foreign Secretary's determination to appoint him against the wishes of a reluctant predecessor and the Prime Minister. The case study of Crowe reveals that a powerful, determined minister could overrule the premier, despite executive authority for appointments resting with the latter. Moreover, it speaks to Fisher's limited influence in the process when competing against resolute political actors.

The appointment of Alexander Maxwell as Permanent Under-Secretary of the Home Office in 1938 further demonstrates the extent to which conflict and competition

⁹² Edward Corp, 'The Problem of Promotion in the Career of Sir Eyre Crowe, 1905-1920', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 28:2 (1982), 236-249.

⁹³ Robert Vansittart, *The Mist Procession: The Autobiography of Lord Vansittart* (London: Hutchinson, 1958), 232-233.

⁹⁴ PA, LG/F/13/1/12, Hardinge to DLG, 16 Aug 1920.

⁹⁵ Crowe and Corp, *Our Ablest Public Servant*, 397-398.

⁹⁶ TNA, T/1/12564/20935, Curzon to Austen Chamberlain, May 1920.

⁹⁷ TNA, T/1/12562/20935, Curzon minute, undated.

⁹⁸ Brian McKercher, 'Old Diplomacy and New: The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1919-1939', in *Diplomacy and World Power: Studies in British Foreign Policy, 1890-1950*, edited by Michael Dockrill and Brian McKercher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 79-114 (87-91).

⁹⁹ David Gilmour, *Curzon* (London: John Murray, 1994), 491; 534-535; CAC, HNKY/1/5, 30 October and 16 November 1920.

characterised promotions, and how the Head of the Civil Service was defeated by a determined minister. Sam Hoare was appointed Home Secretary in May 1937. He was immediately asked to recommend a successor to the retiring Permanent Under-Secretary, Robert Russell Scott, even though he had entered the Home Office mere 'hours' before.¹⁰⁰ This suggests that ministers were asked as a courtesy, rather than because their recommendations on "high-fliers" were taken seriously. With little understanding of the Home Office, Hoare selected an individual from within the department: Alexander Maxwell. As Deputy Under-Secretary, Maxwell was the heir presumptive and a natural choice; he would also be an uncontroversial appointment in a department with a strong *esprit de corps* and which had resented the imposition of a Treasury man as Permanent Under-Secretary in 1932. Hoare may also have hoped that Maxwell would be a useful crutch in helping him to navigate his way as Home Secretary. In contrast, Fisher strongly opposed the appointment of Maxwell and sought to appoint a candidate from the Treasury.¹⁰¹ Although it is not known why Fisher opposed Maxwell's appointment, Fisher had transplanted 'fluidity' candidates into the Home Office in 1922 (Anderson) and again in 1932 (Russell Scott) and was scathing about the institutional defects of the department. While Fisher possessed greater knowledge of the Civil Service than Hoare, the Home Secretary embodied significant political capital. When Hoare refused to cave to Fisher's pressure and insisted on Maxwell's promotion, the Prime Minister (Neville Chamberlain) appointed Maxwell.

Hoare recounted this clash as he prepared his memoir for publication in the 1950s.¹⁰² He recalled how Fisher 'could not have been more difficult, and for some reason or other had a prejudice against the Home Office in general and Maxwell in particular'. When Hoare asked Edward Bridges and Norman Brook (Head of the Civil Service and Cabinet Secretary, respectively) for comments on his manuscript, both were shocked to read the story. The Establishment moved quickly to protect its self-image and preserve the narrative of harmony and consensus. Bridges confessed 'to being a little sorry that this should be recorded', while Brook admitted that 'I would be happier if it were not generally known...I have no right to ask you to suppress this disclosure, but I felt obliged to let you know how I feel about it'.¹⁰³ Brook emphasised that he was

¹⁰⁰ Lord Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years* (London: Collins, 1954), 229.

¹⁰¹ CAC, OHPN/1, Lord Allen of Abbeydale to O'Halpin, 23 August 1981.

¹⁰² Cambridge University Library, Cambridge [hereafter CUL], Templewood XIX/File 12, f. 162, Bridges to Templewood, undated but January 1954; f. 175, Templewood to Brook, 18 January 1954.

¹⁰³ CUL, Templewood XIX/File 12, f. 162, Bridges to Templewood, undated but January 1954; XIX/ File 12, f. 168, Brook to Templewood, undated but January 1954.

concerned that 'this revelation will discredit Fisher'. It would also, undoubtedly, embarrass Maxwell. These highly tactful, subtle comments, in which Bridges and Brook stressed that there were no valid grounds for objection, but that they were personally disinclined towards such revelations, expertly hit the mark. Hoare excised the references to Fisher in his memoirs and agreed with Brook that 'there is no need to tell a story that certainly does not redound to his [Fisher's] credit'.¹⁰⁴ While Brook stressed that removing the passage protected Fisher's reputation, it was arguably as much to protect that of Whitehall.

The promotion of William Tyrrell also speaks to the influence of departmental ministers in determining promotions. Rather unconventionally, Tyrrell was the grandson of an Indian princess and son of a Roman Catholic, Anglo-Irish lawyer. He was educated at Balliol College, Oxford, although he received a third class in moderations and never completed the degree. Despite an 'unexceptional' start in the Foreign Office, Tyrrell subsequently spent much of his early career as Private Secretary to the Permanent Under-Secretary and then to the Foreign Secretary.¹⁰⁵ Frequently lackadaisical, Tyrrell was prompted on one occasion by his Permanent Secretary that a decision was required. Tyrrell merely agreed, 'Yes, it is'.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, Tyrrell cultivated excellent relationships with successive Foreign Secretaries, including Edward Grey, Curzon, and Austen Chamberlain. He owed his elevation to Assistant Under-Secretary in 1921 to Curzon and it was Chamberlain who instigated Tyrrell promotion to Permanent Under-Secretary in 1925.¹⁰⁷

Like Tyrrell, Robert Vansittart's rise to the top demonstrates the importance of serving in a minister's private office. Vansittart enjoyed a relatively privileged upbringing and was educated at Eton, where he became captain of the Oppidans at the apex of the school hierarchy. He placed first in the Diplomatic Service examinations and after a series of successful junior postings abroad, transferred to the Foreign Office in London.¹⁰⁸ Dispatched to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, his work was praised by Curzon, who invited Vansittart to serve as his private secretary in September 1920.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ CUL, Templewood XIX/File 12, f. 175, Templewood to Brook, 18 January 1954.

¹⁰⁵ Keith Neilson and T.G. Otte, *The Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1854-1946* (London: Routledge, 2009), 187-188.

¹⁰⁶ FCO Historians, 'The Permanent Under-Secretary of State: A Brief History of its Holders', *History Notes*, 15 (2002), 27.

¹⁰⁷ TNA, T/162/24/E1551, Fisher to Davies, 13 January 1921; T/273/94, Chamberlain to Fisher, 1 May 1925.

¹⁰⁸ Norman Rose, *Vansittart: Study of a Diplomat* (London: Heinemann, 1978), 4-30; Vansittart, *Mist Procession*, 28-43.

¹⁰⁹ Vansittart, *Mist Procession*, 198; 252-4.

Promotion to a minister's private office was a great distinction and offered a bird's-eye view of the department and policymaking. Vansittart managed the heavy demands of the post, especially liaising between No. 10 Downing Street and the Foreign Office during strained relations.¹¹⁰ Following Labour's victory in the December 1923 election, Ramsay MacDonald assumed the responsibilities of the Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister. The Permanent Under-Secretary, Crowe, falsely represented to MacDonald that Vansittart was 'eager' to leave the private office and return to regular departmental work.¹¹¹ Vansittart's biographer has convincingly suggested that Crowe resented Vansittart's rapid rise through the 'backdoor' of the private office.¹¹²

Nonetheless, Vansittart's prospects were boosted in 1928. Fisher had long desired to make the Prime Minister's private office the preserve of regular civil servants rather than political patronage and seized his opportunity in 1928 when a vacancy arose.¹¹³ It is unclear why Vansittart was offered the post. Despite historians' assertions that Fisher or Baldwin selected Vansittart, it is unlikely that either had crossed paths with him beyond a passing acquaintance.¹¹⁴ It was more likely Tyrrell, at this time Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office, who suggested Vansittart. Tyrrell was a member of the Prime Minister's inner-circle who advised Baldwin on a range of issues.¹¹⁵ Vansittart's new position in No. 10 Downing Street provided him with a better understanding of high politics and policy-making. It also brought Vansittart into close contact with leading politicians and officials, including Baldwin and Fisher.¹¹⁶ When MacDonald replaced Baldwin as Prime Minister in May 1929, he asked Vansittart to remain in the private office because MacDonald needed 'someone who will say No to me'.¹¹⁷ Vansittart quickly impressed MacDonald and was soon on intimate terms with the Prime Minister.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁰ Edward Bridges, 'Administration: What is it? And How Can it be Learnt?', in *The Making of an Administrator*, edited by A. Dunshire (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956), 1-23 (20).

¹¹¹ Vansittart, *Mist Procession*, 307.

¹¹² Rose, *Vansittart*, 60.

¹¹³ CUL, Baldwin 163/113, Fisher to Baldwin, 3 March 1928; O'Halpin, *Head of the Civil Service*, 10; Blick and Jones, *At Power's Elbow*, 157.

¹¹⁴ Rose, *Vansittart*, 64; O'Halpin, *Head of the Civil Service*, 110.

¹¹⁵ Keith Middlemas and John Barnes, *Baldwin: A Biography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 485; Vansittart, *Mist Procession*, 347-8.

¹¹⁶ CUL, Baldwin 234/121, Vansittart to Baldwin, n.d. (filed 1929).

¹¹⁷ Vansittart, *Mist Procession*, 370-371.

¹¹⁸ "The Deep and Latent Distrust: The British Official Mind and the United States, 1919-1929", in *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy*, edited by B.J.C. McKercher (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), 209-238 (230).

Vansittart's relationship with MacDonald was the springboard for Vansittart's promotion to the top of the Foreign Office. Walford Selby, Private Secretary to the Foreign Secretary (Arthur Henderson), recalled the struggle over Ronald Lindsay's successor in his memoirs. Although a well-placed observer, Selby was no disinterested bystander; his vendetta against Fisher and Vansittart will be explored in chapter six. Selby described how Henderson selected Eric Drummond (later Lord Perth) but was denied his preferred candidate by Fisher, who successfully manipulated MacDonald into approving Vansittart's promotion.¹¹⁹ In Selby's account, Fisher's manipulation of the Prime Minister was contextualised within a wider narrative of abuses of power and excessive interference in the Foreign Office, ultimately menacing 'the authority of Ministers over the Departments entrusted to them'.¹²⁰ Selby blamed Fisher and Vansittart for the international crises of the late 1930s and was personally bitter that his friend, Drummond, had been passed over. Historians have largely accepted and repeated as gospel Selby's claim that Fisher scotched Drummond's appointment and was responsible for Vansittart's promotion.¹²¹ Certainly, Drummond was a strong contender; he was well-respected and had served as Secretary General to the League of Nations for a decade. Yet Selby's narrative overlooked the animosity between MacDonald and Drummond which stemmed from the Prime Minister's personal disapproval of his fellow Scot's conversion to Roman Catholicism.¹²² As a result, MacDonald denied Drummond not only the promotion to Permanent Under-Secretary, but also ambassadorships in Washington and Paris.

It is unclear whether MacDonald or Fisher instigated Vansittart's candidacy. That no alternative civil servant's name was mentioned suggests that Fisher supported Vansittart's promotion, regardless of whether he first proposed the idea. Fisher no doubt felt that Vansittart's tenure at No. 10 had drawn him out of the narrow departmental confines of the Foreign Office and thus struck a balance between 'fluidity' and the department's insularity. Aged 49, Vansittart's appointment also repudiated promotion by seniority – the 'Buggins' turn' line of succession. Resentment within the department that Vansittart had leapfrogged his seniors undoubtedly encouraged

¹¹⁹ Bodleian, MS. Eng. c. 6613, 'The Back-Room Boys', 1 April 1958; MS. Eng. c. 6614, 'The Operation of the Head of the Civil Service', Selby; Walford Selby, *Diplomatic Twilight, 1930-1940* (London: John Murray, 1953), 4-5.

¹²⁰ Selby, *Diplomatic Twilight*, 4.

¹²¹ David Carlton's unquestioning acceptance of Selby's narrative directed much of the subsequent historiography; *MacDonald versus Henderson: The Foreign Policy of the Second Labour Government* (London: Macmillan, 1970), 23. The ignorance persists; see Adrian Phillips, *Fighting Churchill, Appeasing Hitler* (London: Biteback, 2019), 59-61.

¹²² James Barros, *Office Without Power: Secretary-General, Sir Eric Drummond, 1919-1933* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 15.

rumours of undue interference by the Head of the Civil Service to influence promotions.¹²³ However, there is no evidence to suggest that Fisher cultivated MacDonald's mind to influence his preferences. Indeed, the premier valued Vansittart as a reliable, capable, and experienced official.¹²⁴ Vansittart hinted in his memoirs that MacDonald appointed him to the post of Permanent Under-Secretary because the Prime Minister required assistance.¹²⁵ This assertion was corroborated by the MacDonald's insistence that 'the F.O. needs the most efficient guidance it can get ... You will have very important work'.¹²⁶ On the eve of his departure, Vansittart promised MacDonald to 'be of some use' and 'remain in close touch with No. 10'.¹²⁷ Such euphemisms imply that Vansittart was to act as the Prime Minister's hands and eyes in the Foreign Office. The close association between Vansittart and MacDonald may have been particularly important as the Prime Minister found himself at odds with his Foreign Secretary.¹²⁸

Vansittart's promotion reflects the extent to which appointments were characterised by conflict and demonstrates how both contemporaries and historians have exaggerated the influence of the Head of the Civil Service. There is no evidence to suggest that Fisher was the determining voice. Vansittart ultimately owed his promotion to his proximity to the premier and MacDonald's superior power in the clash between the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. This was a direct reversal of Crowe's appointment, when the stubborn Foreign Secretary secured his preferred candidate against the Prime Minister's opposition. Additionally, this case study nuances the interplay between hierarchies and networks. Although Vansittart was promoted to the headship from within the department, it was the networks in which he was embedded, rather than his place as heir apparent within the Foreign Office hierarchy, which secured his appointment.

While Vansittart's promotion emphasises the importance of the private office, the rise of his successor reveals the significance of mandarin-minister encounters beyond this dynamic. Anthony Eden's machinations to promote Alexander Cadogan demonstrated how ministers chose – and passionately fought for – officials with whom

¹²³ Owen O'Malley interview, 9 April 1970 in Geoffrey Fry, 'Three Giants of the Inter-war British Higher Civil Service: Sir Maurice Hankey, Sir Warren Fisher and Sir Horace Wilson', in *Bureaucrats and Leadership*, edited by Kevin Theakston (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 39-67.

¹²⁴ B.J.C. McKercher, 'The Last Old Diplomat: Sir Robert Vansittart and the Verities of British Foreign Policy, 1903-30', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 6:1 (1995), 1-38 (28-29); O'Halpin also recognises MacDonald's inclination towards Vansittart, *Head of the Civil Service*, 184.

¹²⁵ Vansittart, *Mist Procession*, 394.

¹²⁶ CAC, VNST/II/6, MacDonald to Vansittart, 26 December 1929.

¹²⁷ TNA, PRO/30/69/672, Vansittart to MacDonald, 24 December 1929.

¹²⁸ Rose, *Vansittart*, 70.

they enjoyed a close professional and personal relationship, who they trusted and respected, and who they hoped might bolster their own position within the department. 'Alec' was the youngest son of the aristocratic Cadogan family. He enjoyed the social distinctions of being captain of the Oppidans and a member of Pop at Eton, before reading History at Balliol College, Oxford.¹²⁹ After a series of junior diplomatic postings, Cadogan passed the war in the Commercial and Sanitary Department, far from the mainstream of activity, and then served briefly as Private Secretary to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary.¹³⁰

From 1924, Cadogan was attached to the British Delegation to the League of Nations. Although many of the initiatives mooted in Geneva were abortive, Cadogan gained experience in soothing tensions and drafting compromises, and transformed into a respected diplomat.¹³¹ However, to a greater degree, the significance of Cadogan's decade in Geneva lay in the relationships he forged. The Foreign Secretary, John Simon, was almost universally disliked, and particularly infuriated those toiling over disarmament conventions at Geneva.¹³² Cadogan confided his aggravations to his wife: tales of Simon's deviousness, profound laziness, and fits of defeatism abounded in letters home.¹³³ Simon's failings threw into sharper relief the merits of others – notably Anthony Eden, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. The contrast in Cadogan's accounts of the two politicians is striking. Cadogan was 'entirely fed up with everyone ... except ... Eden, than whom no one could possibly be better', and believed that it 'certainly makes a great difference having to work for someone who is a friend and who has some sincerity and character about him'.¹³⁴ Equally important was Eden's struggle to work with an insincere and absconding master who was so indecisive that 'we have no Foreign Secretary, only the appearance of one, which is worse than none'.¹³⁵ In the testing circumstances of Geneva, Eden came to appreciate the amiable and

¹²⁹ Oliver Lyttelton, *The Memoirs of Lord Chandos* (London: The Bodley Head, 1962), 4.

¹³⁰ CAC, ACAD/7/1, 'Early Days in the F.O.'; Neilson and Otte, *Permanent Under-Secretary*, 234.

¹³¹ Zara Steiner, *The Lights that Failed: European International History, 1919-1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 755-799; CAC, ACAD/3/6-8, Cadogan to Theo correspondence, 1933.

¹³² Carolyn J. Kitching, *Britain and the Geneva Disarmament Conference* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 43. David Dutton offered a more sympathetic impression, see *Simon: A Political Biography of Sir John Simon* (London: Aurum Press, 1992), especially 151-179.

¹³³ CAC, ACAD/3/6, Cadogan to Theo, 12 February 1933; ACAD/3/7, Cadogan to Theo, 10 May 1933; ACAD/1/1, 6 September 1933. See also Andrew Webster, "'The Disenchantment Conference': Frustration and Humour at the World Disarmament Conference, 1932', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 11:3 (2000), 72-80 (72).

¹³⁴ CAC, GLAD/8/13, Cadogan to Jebb, 17 November 1933; ACAD/3/6; Cadogan to Theo, 3 February 1933.

¹³⁵ Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham [hereafter CRL], AP/20/1/13, 17 May 1933.

dependable Cadogan.¹³⁶ Their friendship and professional relationship was further forged through social activities, including dinners, walks in the countryside, or cinema outings.¹³⁷

Following Cadogan's promotion to the Peking embassy in 1933, he continued to cultivate his relationship with Eden, perhaps because he recognised that Eden was likely destined to rise high in government. Their correspondence testifies to a close, informal relationship, marked by a heavy degree of flattery towards Eden.¹³⁸ Eden, in turn, sought Cadogan's advice and hoped 'that some day you and I may find ourselves working together again rather more intimately'.¹³⁹ Cadogan's association with Eden was the transformational ingredient in his path to the top. Those in Whitehall understood the importance of cultivating a network of supportive politicians.¹⁴⁰ Mandarins were not 'deluded'; they 'know who, within the Cabinet, is up or moving up, and who is down or moving down'.¹⁴¹ Cadogan's tenure in China was interrupted in February 1936 when Eden, now Foreign Secretary, offered him the more senior of the two Deputy Under-Secretary posts. Cadogan understood that 'this may be a step towards Van's post'.¹⁴²

This appointment horrified Warren Fisher, who thought there to be 'a crying need' for good men in the Foreign Office.¹⁴³ Fisher doubted that 'Cadogan has the elements of leadership in him or the type of constructive imagination' which Fisher believed to be vital in tendering policy advice and inspiring the Foreign Service. He favoured Robert Craigie for the position and was disappointed to find that Eden desired to appoint Cadogan and Lancelot Oliphant as Deputy Under-Secretaries. Fisher compromised and submitted Cadogan and Craigie to the Prime Minister as candidates. However, Eden was unwilling to settle. He spoke directly to Stanley Baldwin, claiming to have obtained Fisher's agreement and secured the Prime Minister's assent for

¹³⁶ CRL, AP/14/1/156, Cadogan to Eden, 1 May 1933; Anthony Eden, *Facing the Dictators* (London: Cassell, 1962), 28-32.

¹³⁷ CAC, ACAD/3/7, Cadogan to Theo, 1 May 1933; ACAD/3/6, Cadogan to Theo, 28 January 1933; ACAD/1/1, 10 October 1933.

¹³⁸ For instance, CRL, AP/14/1/405, Cadogan to Eden, 24 January 1935; AP/15/1/129, Cadogan to Eden, 30 December 1935.

¹³⁹ CRL, AP/14/1/405B, Eden to Cadogan, 15 March 1935.

¹⁴⁰ CAC, AHKY/1/1/45, Hankey to Taffa, 23 September 1933.

¹⁴¹ Jock Bruce-Gardyne, *Ministers and Mandarins: Inside the Whitehall Village* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1986), 30; Clement Attlee, 'Civil Servants, Ministers, Parliament and the Public', *Political Quarterly*, 25:4 (1954), 308-315 (311).

¹⁴² CAC, ACAD/1/4, 4 February 1936.

¹⁴³ TNA, T/273/94, Fisher's memorandum, 6 February 1936.

Cadogan and Oliphant. Although peeved, Fisher let the matter rest as he recognised the futility of fighting against a *fait accompli*.¹⁴⁴

Fisher recognised that Eden's deft tactics to install Cadogan as heir presumptive were the first step in promoting him to the top of the Foreign Office. Fisher had other designs. He flirted with the possibility of nominating Frederick Leith-Ross, the well-respected Chief Economic Advisor who was close to both Fisher and Chamberlain, before settling on Samuel Findlater-Stewart, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the India Office, and thus a 'fluidity' candidate intended to lessen the Foreign Office's isolation from wider Whitehall.¹⁴⁵ Meanwhile, Eden and Cadogan continued to grow close. Eden found Cadogan's temperament and outlook more palatable and pragmatic than Vansittart's, and Fisher perceived how this bond might derail his own plans. In a desperate attempt to obstruct Eden's designs, Fisher sought reassurance from Neville Chamberlain that 'when the time comes Alec Cadogan is out of the question; and if nothing else will prevent it, I shall have to ask the Government to put me there, tho' this would mean a step down in rank for me and a loss of £500 a year'.¹⁴⁶ Chamberlain duly supported Findlater-Stewart and 'did not favour' Cadogan.¹⁴⁷

Although Fisher was able to cultivate the mind of the Prime Minister by leveraging their intimate relationship and his status as an omniscient hub of Whitehall information, the Head of the Civil Service's influence over appointments depended on the Prime Minister's ability to convert preferences into outcomes. Chamberlain was not able to secure his desired outcome against the wishes of a determined minister. Refusing to accept Findlater-Stewart and stressing that a 'trained diplomat' rather than outsider must be appointed, Eden threw his political capital behind Cadogan and firmly asserted that he would not accept any other candidate.¹⁴⁸ Reflecting the relative power balance between the two politicians, Chamberlain yielded and accepted that Cadogan's underwhelming merits as a 'sane slow man' might make him a good foil to Eden.¹⁴⁹ Both Fisher and Chamberlain continued to bide their time in the hope of reforming and even

¹⁴⁴ TNA, T/273/94, Fisher's memorandum, 8 February 1936.

¹⁴⁵ 16 August 1936 in Kenneth Young (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, Volume I: 1915-1938* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 351-352; O'Halpin, *Head of the Civil Service*, 254.

¹⁴⁶ CRL, NC/7/11/29/19, Fisher to Chamberlain, 15 September 1936; 2 July 1936 in Charles Stuart (ed.), *The Reith Diaries* (London: Collins, 1975), 211.

¹⁴⁷ 4 May 1937 in John Harvey (ed.), *The Diplomatic Diaries of Oliver Harvey, 1937-1940* (London: Collins, 1970), 43-44.

¹⁴⁸ 4 May 1937 in Harvey (ed.), *Diplomatic Diaries*, 43-44.

¹⁴⁹ CRL, NC/18/1/1031, Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 12 December 1937.

overhauling the Foreign Office, which they regarded with contempt.¹⁵⁰ In a thinly veiled swipe, Vansittart accurately pinpointed that the vital ingredient in Cadogan's rise to the top was the luck of clinching a powerful political patron.¹⁵¹ This was hypocritical given Vansittart's own reliance on political patronage. In addition to underscoring the importance of politicians' preferences in promotions, Cadogan's appointment emphasises the extent to which the process was marred by conflict and competition. It also further demonstrates how the Head of the Civil Service frequently struggled to exert influence in the selection of elite officials when challenged by a determined minister.

Fisher also failed to secure his preferred candidate as his own successor on his retirement in 1939. Fisher favoured P.J. Grigg. From a modest background, Grigg won a scholarship to read Mathematics at St John's College, Cambridge, and then served in the First World War. Placing first in the Civil Service examinations, Grigg joined the Treasury and rose quickly, catching Fisher's eye. In 1921, Fisher appointed Grigg as his private secretary, and Grigg proceeded to the eminent position of Principal Private Secretary to the Chancellor of the Exchequer – a post which Grigg held for a decade. During this period, Grigg was drawn into close association with leading political figures, including Baldwin, Chamberlain, and Winston Churchill; he gained wide experience of Treasury work; and assembled a vast network of contacts.¹⁵² Grigg was subsequently elevated to Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue and, in 1934, dispatched to India as the Finance Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, testifying to his stature within the Civil Service. As Grigg's time in India expired, he enquired whether Fisher's promise of a headship might bear fruit. Fisher, however, had been unable to secure Chamberlain's support for Grigg's appointment as Head of the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary to the Treasury. Fisher admitted that Horace Wilson was 'clearly marked out for the post' in the Prime Minister's mind.¹⁵³ It is not difficult to understand the difficulties encountered by Fisher. By this time, the estrangement between Fisher and Chamberlain was at its most profound, and Chamberlain's standing within government was at its highest. That Grigg could not clinch the Holy Grail of headships, despite having served as Chamberlain's private secretary earlier in his career, nuances understandings of the importance of serving in a minister's private office. Eager to find

¹⁵⁰ TNA, T/273/94, Fisher to Chamberlain, 17 December 1937; Wilson to Chamberlain, 20 June 1939.

¹⁵¹ CUL, Templewood XIX/File 5, 'Talk with Van', 14 May 1953; Vansittart, *Mist Procession*, 398-399.

¹⁵² Grigg, *Prejudice and Judgment*, 13-58.

¹⁵³ TNA, T/273/148, Fisher to Grigg, 18 November 1938.

suitable employment for his old friend and perceiving a ‘real need for a new broom’ at the War Office, Fisher collaborated with Leslie Hore-Belisha, Secretary of State for War, to successfully install Grigg as Permanent Under-Secretary.¹⁵⁴

In contrast to most of his colleagues at the pinnacle of Whitehall, Horace Wilson rose to the top from humble origins.¹⁵⁵ Wilson’s upward social mobility was akin to that of Grigg, as well as Francis Floud (Permanent Under-Secretary to the Ministry of Labour) yet was nevertheless an exception to the wider middle and upper-middle class character of the elite Civil Service.¹⁵⁶ Born to a working-class family in Bournemouth and given only a basic education at a local school, Wilson joined the War Office at the most junior grade – a boy clerk – in the executive, rather than administrative, branch of the Civil Service; the latter was the pool from which elite mandarins were selected. In the evenings, Wilson studied for an Economics degree at the London School of Economics and progressed through the ranks of the Civil service, from the War Office to the Board of Trade and the new Ministry of Labour, to which he was appointed Permanent Under-Secretary in 1921 at the age of 39. Wilson’s success was founded on his unparalleled experience and talents in negotiation and industrial conciliation, his consistently calm demeanour, and his reputation as ‘an absolutely gold brain’.¹⁵⁷ As industrial disputes dominated the domestic policy agenda in the interwar years, Wilson’s expertise made him ‘the right man, in the right place, at the right time’.¹⁵⁸ This was particularly evident from 1926, when Wilson grew close to Baldwin as a key advisor throughout the General Strike.¹⁵⁹ Wilson’s activities also impressed Chamberlain, who observed during the crisis that Wilson had ‘a cool head’.¹⁶⁰

Nevertheless, Wilson’s career was stunted when he was transferred from the Ministry of Labour to the experimental “ministry of unemployment”, established in 1929 to tackle the surge in unemployment resulting from the first shocks of the Great Depression. The project failed and to spare blushes, Wilson was seconded to the Board of Trade in 1930 as Chief Industrial Advisor.¹⁶¹ Although the failure nearly ended

¹⁵⁴ TNA, T/273/148, Fisher to Grigg, 18 November 1938; CAC, HOBE/1/5, 23 and 24 January 1939; HOBE/5/47, Fisher to Hore-Belisha, 7 January 1939.

¹⁵⁵ Lowe and Roberts ‘Horace Wilson’, 642-645.

¹⁵⁶ CAC, FLUD/7/2, ‘From Temporary Clerk to Permanent Secretary’, *Civil Service Argus*.

¹⁵⁷ Norman, *Whitehall to West Indies*, 84-85; W.J. Brown, *So Far...* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1943), 220; 3 October 1933 in Young (ed.), *Lockhart Diaries, Volume I*, 275-276.

¹⁵⁸ Phillips, *Fighting Churchill*, 15.

¹⁵⁹ Keith Middlemas (ed.), *Thomas Jones, Whitehall Diary. Volume II: 1926-1930* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 22-25.

¹⁶⁰ CRL, NC/2/22, May 1926

¹⁶¹ Lowe and Roberts ‘Horace Wilson’, 646

Wilson's career, the fiasco 'proved his salvation. For the fact that he was at a loose end ... led to his being employed *ad hoc* on particular pieces of work'.¹⁶² One such undertaking was the Ottawa Conference of 1932, where Wilson led the British Civil Service group. His skills in negotiating, briefing, and drafting were appreciated by both Baldwin and Chamberlain. Chamberlain – at this point Chancellor of the Exchequer – particularly valued Wilson's industriousness and sage advice.¹⁶³ Securing the support of such patrons was the transformational element in Wilson's rise to the headship of the Treasury.

Wilson's career was further advanced by networks of politicians and officials. In 1935, Fisher contemplated further changes to the Prime Minister's private office. He and Tom Jones, one of Baldwin's close associates and previously Deputy Cabinet Secretary, agreed that Baldwin's lackadaisical ways and the burden of work necessitated the secondment of a personal aide to No. 10 Downing Street 'who knew the machine of government' to 'help' the Prime Minister.¹⁶⁴ Wilson was chosen as a highly capable official with whom Baldwin was already on excellent terms, to act as his sounding board and to assist Baldwin with enunciating policy detail and implementing decisions.¹⁶⁵ Although Wilson later attempted to pretend that the reform had been Baldwin's idea, this was false.¹⁶⁶ Wilson became *de facto* Permanent Secretary to the Prime Minister.¹⁶⁷ The post was vague and Wilson feared that he would be attacked by ministers 'hot against any attempt to subordinate them to any sort of super-Civil Servant'.¹⁶⁸ Wilson handled all the papers sent to Baldwin and 'knew S.B.'s mind so well that he could ... dispose of a great many matters for him' and was a particularly 'invaluable' during the Abdication crisis of 1936.¹⁶⁹ At the same time, Wilson grew close to Chamberlain, who assumed the premiership in 1937 and retained Wilson in his anomalous position; Wilson felt this was because Chamberlain's 'lonely' character required 'comfort'.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶² Brown, *So Far...*, 220-221.

¹⁶³ Neville Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 3 August, and Neville Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 11 August 1932 in Robert Self (ed.), *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters, Volume 3. The Heir Apparent, 1928-1933* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 338-342.

¹⁶⁴ National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth [hereafter NLW], Jones P3/68, 'Notes of a conversation with Sir Horace Wilson', 16 July 1942.

¹⁶⁵ NLW, Jones P3/60, 'Notes from a Cliveden meeting'.

¹⁶⁶ Addison Papers, Interview with Sir Horace Wilson, 4 April 1967.

¹⁶⁷ Blick and Jones, *At Power's Elbow*, 164.

¹⁶⁸ 26 July 1935 in Marguerite Dupree (ed.), *Lancashire and Whitehall: The Diary of Sir Raymond Streat. Volume I: 1931-39* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 396-399

¹⁶⁹ Thomas Jones, *A Diary with Letters, 1931-1950* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 291; J.C.W. Reith, *Into the Wind* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1949), 263-5; Middlemas and Barnes, *Baldwin*, pp. 496-497.

¹⁷⁰ CRL, NC/18/1/977, Neville Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 23 September 1936; Addison Papers, Interview with Sir Horace Wilson, 4 April 1967.

Closely aligned with the premier's worldview and part of Chamberlain's inner-circle, the Prime Minister's trusted lieutenant was the natural choice for the highest post in the Civil Service. By May 1939, Wilson stood at the apex of Whitehall: Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, Head of the Civil Service, and *de facto* Permanent Secretary to the Prime Minister. Widely believed to be the 'power behind Mr. Chamberlain's elbow', Wilson was mired in a number of domestic and foreign policy initiatives which alienated him from resentful ministers and mandarins alike.¹⁷¹ The addition of his new duties only stirred grievances and led to the perception that Wilson wielded 'a power greater than that of any Civil Servant or any Minister'.¹⁷² His appointment demonstrates the importance of political, rather than official, actors in influencing promotions, and further exposes the significance of intimacy with ministers in mandarins' rise to the top.

The turnover of Permanent Secretaries within the Treasury, Cabinet Office, Foreign Office, and Home Office was low during the Second World War. Following Churchill's arrival at No. 10 Downing Street in May 1940, Wilson's duties and influence were heavily curtailed.¹⁷³ He made no secret of his 'lack of strength' under Churchill.¹⁷⁴ Much of Wilson's short tenure as Head of the Civil Service was overshadowed by the sharp backlash against the policy of appeasement, in which he was perceived as Chamberlain's co-conspirator, and thus treated as a pariah in the new coalition government. Attempts to oust Wilson failed, although he was made to retire in 1942 and understood that trying to influence the selection of his successor would be futile. A range of candidates were mooted, and the Prime Minister took a keen interest in the selection of mandarins. Churchill favoured Grigg, although the 'invaluable' Grigg's transfer from the War Office to the Treasury was vetoed by the Secretary of State for War.¹⁷⁵ Clement Attlee favoured Arthur Street, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Air – interestingly, also the man whom Wilson preferred – but Churchill did not think Street 'appropriate' for the role.¹⁷⁶ Instead, Churchill trusted his own judgement and knowledge of the Civil Service and chose Richard Hopkins.

¹⁷¹ Hansard, House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series, vol. 341, cc. 1047-1049, 17 November 1938; *The New York Times*, 10 February 1939.

¹⁷² For example, Hansard, House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series, vol. 352, cc. 514-516, 12 October 1939; Brown, *So Far...*, 220-221.

¹⁷³ The relationship between Wilson and Churchill is explored in the sixth chapter.

¹⁷⁴ TNA, T/273/148, Wilson to Grigg, 18 September 1940.

¹⁷⁵ CAC, CHAR/20/20/28-29, Churchill to Wood, 26 July 1941.

¹⁷⁶ CAC, CHAR/20/20/30, Attlee's proposal; *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 June 1942; Chapman, *Ethics*, 26-31

Hopkins was eminently qualified. After studying History and Classics at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, he gained experience in public finance as Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue.¹⁷⁷ From 1927, Hopkins was one of the Treasury controllers – sitting directly beneath Fisher, although with the status and salary of a Permanent Secretary – and responsible for Finance and Supply Services. His path crossed with Churchill's when the latter was Chancellor, and Hopkins cultivated good relations with mandarins and ministers alike. He advised successive Chancellors on all aspects of financial policy and government expenditure, and both Permanent Secretaries to the Treasury between 1919 and 1942 deferred to his policy expertise. Like Fisher and Wilson before him, Hopkins owed his appointment to ministerial opinion. The press eagerly remarked upon the telling fact that Hopkins was two years older than Wilson when they printed the 'surprising' announcement.¹⁷⁸ Quite apart from the 'Churchillian malice' of retiring Wilson on the grounds of old age only to replace him with an older model, Hopkins' age highlighted that he would be a short-lived appointee.¹⁷⁹ Like a batsman dispatched to end the day's play before the star of the cricket match stepped in the following day, Hopkins was really a night watchman. He was to keep the seat in the Permanent Secretary's office warm until Edward Bridges was no longer needed so urgently in the Cabinet Office. Such an arrangement – where the Head of the Civil Service was effaced entirely from the promotions process and appointments were 'kept on a ministerial plane', free from any manipulative, 'designing bureaucrat' – pleased those such as Hugh Dalton (President of the Board of Trade and future Chancellor of the Exchequer) who were suspicious of Civil Service power.¹⁸⁰

Conclusion

Between 1919 and 1946, most officials at the very peak of Whitehall had been drawn from a single generation. The interwar period began with the striking promotions of young, dynamic figures who were barely forty. By the close of the 1930s, the elite Civil Service had ossified and the average age of promotions to the highest posts

¹⁷⁷ G.C. Peden, 'Sir Richard Hopkins and the "Keynesian Revolution" in Employment Policy, 1929-1945', *The Economic History Review*, 36:2 (1983), 281-296 (282).

¹⁷⁸ *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 June 1942; *The Times*, 19 June 1942.

¹⁷⁹ Lowe and Roberts, 'Horace Wilson', 642.

¹⁸⁰ 6 December 1942 in Ben Pimlott (ed.), *The Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton, 1940-45* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1986), 531-533.

had increased.¹⁸¹ However, this was not the result of Warren Fisher's activities. The interwar Civil Service was shaped by the personal preferences of politicians. Elite Whitehall appointments were thus more politicised than has often been recognised and the influence of the Head of the Civil Service was less. As further explored in chapter six, critics' claims that the Head of the Civil Service was omnipotent and possessed the 'last word' in appointments were untrue.¹⁸²

The extent of ministerial involvement raises important questions concerning meritocracy. Meritocracy remains a highly contested concept.¹⁸³ Those who prosper in apparently meritocratic societies are keen to cocoon themselves in self-congratulatory and smug superiority. While the Civil Service depended to a considerable extent on nepotism in the nineteenth century, much had changed by the first half of the twentieth century. Certainly, the majority of those who occupied the highest posts had passed through the doors of public schools, although this reveals very little as many had done so by way of scholarships, and a great number of those who had attended such schools failed to capture the top posts. Moreover, to highlight the significance of politicians' involvement in promotions is not to dispute that the talented flourished. Political patronage was not nepotism. Indeed, mandarins often secured the support of important individuals in substantial part because their merits were recognised and appreciated. It is abundantly clear, however, that an individual's ability to integrate into personal networks mattered a great deal and it was arguably more important to attract the attention of budding or successful politicians than that of elite officials.

This chapter centres on what might be described as a form of 'kingmaking' and reveals who was the 'setter up and plucker down of Kings' of Whitehall.¹⁸⁴ 'Kingmaking' speaks to the degree to which mandarins and politicians alike invested time, energy, and capital in the appointments process. Where there is power, there is conflict and

¹⁸¹ To illustrate this point, the average age of promotion at the start of the period was 43 years. By 1939, the average age of those being promoted to the Treasury, Home Office, Foreign Office, and Cabinet Office was 54 years. It is also worth noting that the inclusion of Eyre Crowe in such a quantitative approach distorts the relative youth of his fellow Permanent Secretaries.

¹⁸² F.T.A. Ashton-Gwatkin, *The British Foreign Service* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1950), 26-27.

¹⁸³ Daniel Markovits, *The Meritocracy Trap* (London: Penguin, 2020); Peter Mandler, *The Crisis of Meritocracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Adrian Wooldridge, *The Aristocracy of Talent: How Meritocracy Made the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane, 2021).

¹⁸⁴ William Shakespeare, *Henry VI* (New York: Signet Classics, 2005 edition), Part III, Act II, Scene III. See also, Michael Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998); Karl E. Meyer and Shareen Blair Brysac, *Kingmakers: The Invention of the Modern Middle East* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2008); William T. Horner, *Ohio's Kingmaker: Mark Hanna, Man and Myth* (Ohio University Press, 2010).

competition. Promotions at the very top of Whitehall were worth contesting because the struggle to ensure that the “right” person – or, rather, the “right” *man* – secured the post reflected a shared truth: Permanent Secretaries were not simply interchangeable administrative cogs. They mattered on institutional, policy, and political levels.

Chapter Two: Room at the Top

*...It is the shadows rather than the substance of things that move the hearts, and sway the deeds, of statesmen.*¹

Each morning, thousands of neatly dressed individuals traversed Whitehall. Some were ministers, journalists, or ordinary Londoners, although the majority were civil servants: typists, clerks, inspectors, messengers, principals, and secretaries. Amongst these minnows roamed the permanent heads – an elite within an elite. A Permanent Secretary was the highest-ranking official within a department, answerable to the responsible minister.² Today, Permanent Secretaries are predominantly managers.³ The giants of officialdom in the interwar period were also managers, yet this was not a chief concern. Understanding who they were, what they did, and how they behaved is of the greatest importance in exposing the hidden wiring of Whitehall. This chapter thus peers behind the arras and exposes the cultures and mindsets which prevailed at the apex of Whitehall.

Culture can be broadly defined as the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular group. Culture is of such great importance because the modes of thought, operating methods, and unspoken assumptions within a community can constrain and channel its actions and choices.⁴ This chapter employs a collective biography approach to the study of culture and takes as its cornerstone both published primary sources and archival material. As Kevin Theakston has demonstrated, a group focus is far superior to an individual focus when portraying bureaucratic cultures and values.⁵ Moreover, differences are as vital as similarities in sketching the world of the Whitehall elite. These

¹ George Kennan quoted in *John Lewis Gaddis, Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005 edition), 34.

² Nomenclature varied: Permanent Secretary (at the Treasury), Permanent Under-Secretary (at the Home Office and Foreign Office), and Cabinet Secretary (at the Cabinet Office).

³ Richard A. Chapman and Barry J. O'Toole, 'Leadership in the British Civil Service', *Public Policy and Administration*, 25:2 (2010), 123-136; Kevin Theakston, 'New Labour, New Whitehall?', *Public Policy and Administration*, 13:1 (1998), 13-34; Guy Lodge and Ben Rogers, *Whitehall's Black Box: Accountability and Performances in the Senior Civil Service* (London: IPPR, 2006).

⁴ The classic text is James Joll, *1914: The Unspoken Assumptions, An Inaugural Lecture Delivered 25 April 1968* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), especially 6-7, 24.

⁵ Kevin Theakston (ed.), *Bureaucrats and Leadership* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 8.

individuals were not identical: the Civil Service was not one of Henry Ford's infamous production lines, in which officials rolled off the conveyor belt of the Whitehall ladder perfectly identical. Yet they were more similar than different, and diversity was frequently contained within relatively narrow parameters. There was a definite character and style among elite mandarins who dominated the corridors of power, and to a considerable extent, this heterogeneity was driven less by class than professional socialisation within a gendered environment.

The chapter begins by examining the duties and routines of the Whitehall elite and illuminating variations between departments and between peace and wartime. The second section adds colour to the world of elite mandarins. Encompassing aspects of class, gender, language, emotion, dress, and space, it breathes life into traditional studies of the Civil Service. The second half of the chapter examines mindsets.⁶ It veers deliberately from a discussion of policy mindsets. Some excellent studies have already sketched such mindsets amongst elite officials.⁷ Instead, it considers how elite mandarins translated principles such as ethics, reform, and neutrality into practice. After examining conceptions of professional ethics through the lens of corruption scandals, it then questions the extent to which elite mandarins were imbued with a reforming spirit. The latter is explored through a study of how senior officials responded to plans to admit women to the higher classes of the Civil Service. The last section investigates one of the most significant aspects of elite Whitehall culture: the deftness with which mandarins often transferred loyalty between administrations to serve governments of any political colour.

The Rhythms of Routine

Although Permanent Secretaries' duties varied between departments and between war and peacetime, there was a 'core curriculum'.⁸ Permanent Secretaries'

⁶ The concept of an 'official mind' is a fertile one. Two of the best works are *Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1961) and T.G. Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Foreign Policy, 1865-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁷ For example, G.C. Peden, 'Sir Richard Hopkins and the 'Keynesian Revolution' in Employment Policy, 1929-45', *Economic History Review*, 36:2 (1983), 281-296.

⁸ Peter Barberis, *The Elite of the Elite: Permanent Secretaries in the British Higher Civil Service* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1996), 86.

main responsibility was to advise ministers on a wide range of issues under the remit of their department. They possessed access to the most important information and read vast quantities of material, from memoranda to despatches. They often minuted what they read, contributing to the department's collective thinking, while also distilling the department's advice and devising recommendations for the minister or issuing instructions to their juniors. Considerable time was spent in meetings, whether consulting with deputies and ministers to devise solutions to problems, or collaborating with counterparts in other departments, such as to share intelligence or resolve interdepartmental matters. There was, moreover, a social dimension to Permanent Secretary's duties. There were frequent lunches and dinners with colleagues, ministers, and dignitaries. There were also ceremonial events, often at Buckingham Palace, or to welcome new recruits. Elite officials were even occasionally invited to Chequers, the Prime Minister's country house. By 1922, Permanent Secretaries received a £3,000 salary, plus a supplementary bonus. The Permanent Secretary to the Treasury claimed a further £500 for additional duties as Head of the Civil Service. Although this was handsome pay relative to the lesser ranks of the Civil Service, the sums were considerably less than those offered to elite professionals in the private sector.⁹

By the interwar years, mandarins no longer worked from twelve to four, as they had in the Victorian and Edwardian ages.¹⁰ Arriving at the Home Office at 10.15, he would steam through his papers and meetings, enjoy a long lunch at the Reform Club and leave the Home Office promptly at 18.15 to catch his train. Unlike many colleagues, Anderson never took files home to work after dinner. Warren Fisher enjoyed a similar routine at the Treasury, although his day was punctuated by sherry parties held for juniors in his grand office before vacating the Treasury for a long club lunch. Fisher was also like Anderson in preferring to work by discussion rather than through a profusion of minutes on files.¹¹ Having delegated large swathes of the Treasury's work to his Controllers, Fisher devoted much of his day to the business of the Head of the Civil Service. He also exhibited 'magpie' tendencies in picking and choosing any issues which caught his attention – including foreign policy – to 'pass the time'.¹²

⁹ £3,000 in 1922 is worth approximately £174,000 by 2020's prices; TNA, T/165/49, Treasury Estimates, 1922-1923.

¹⁰ C.K. Munro, *The Fountains in Trafalgar Square: Some Reflections on the Civil Service* (London: William Heinemann, 1952).

¹¹ CAC, OHPN/2, Notes of a talk with John Winnifrith, 4 December 1979.

¹² Eunan O'Halpin, *Head of the Civil Service: A Study of Sir Warren Fisher* (London: Routledge, 1989), 203; 291; CAC, ROSK/7/94, Ronald Wells to Roskill, 4 June 1970.

It was arguably the Cabinet Secretary who worked the longest hours and in the most arrhythmic routine, even in peacetime. This was partly due to Maurice Hankey's dual responsibilities towards the Cabinet Office and Committee of Imperial Defence (CID), as well as his penchant for interfering in so many issues. Hankey began each morning with a bracing two-mile walk to the train station and arrived at the Cabinet Office earlier than his peers, usually to consult with the Prime Minister on Cabinet matters. Wednesdays were Cabinet days, when Hankey would dash across to No. 10 Downing Street for 11.00, return to the office after 14.00 and eat at his desk while dictating the conclusions to a stenographer.¹³ Throughout the interwar period, Hankey occasionally travelled abroad to international conferences, from Paris to the Hague, and Washington to Genoa, and in 1934, conducted a long tour of the Dominions. He rarely left the office before 20.00 and often worked late in the evenings, and at weekends. At the Foreign Office, the Permanent Under-Secretary's routine was equally varied. Like Anderson, Eyre Crowe enjoyed long lunches in Pall Mall, although the strain of his work weighed more heavily. Crowe complained that long after his demanding minister – who thought all officials lackadaisical – had 'gone home in his Rolls-Royce, I have to catch a No. 11 bus ... sup off sardines or cold sausages before dealing with the evening's telegrams'.¹⁴ His successor, William Tyrrell, is rumoured to have struggled with drink and had to be smuggled on at least one occasion from the Foreign Office by a loyal underling.¹⁵ Despite the strain of long days, Robert Vansittart took comfort in a regular routine. He arrived at the Foreign Office by 10.00 and spent a quarter of his day in meetings and consultations; the rest was devoted to the tyranny of accumulating files. Leaving the office at 19.00, Vansittart would play cards at St James's for an hour and then return home to work on files until at least midnight.¹⁶

Crises and war disrupted the rhythms of the Whitehall elite. During Horace Wilson's early months as Permanent Secretary to the Treasury in 1939, he moved constantly between No. 10 and the Treasury, fulfilling his additional duties as Neville Chamberlain's right-hand man. He would arrive at No. 10 for 9.30 and spend his day reading all the most important papers and leaving notes for Chamberlain's consideration, working on committees and consulting with colleagues across Whitehall, and then meeting the Prime Minister in the late evening. He rarely returned home before

¹³ CAC, BRGS/1/1, f. 45; HNKY/3/30, Hankey to Adeline, 13 June 1933.

¹⁴ Owen O'Malley, *The Phantom Caravan* (London: John Murray, 1954), 60.

¹⁵ 17 July 1929 in Kenneth Young (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, Volume I: 1915-1938* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 97-98.

¹⁶ Robert Vansittart, *The Mist Procession: The Autobiography of Lord Vansittart* (London: Hutchinson, 1958), 408.

midnight.¹⁷ Wilson also worked closely with – and often against – the Foreign Office, and frequently attended Cabinet at the Prime Minister’s insistence.¹⁸ As explored in chapter six, Wilson’s position was radically altered in May 1940 when he was banished to the Treasury by Winston Churchill. Churchill’s arrival at No. 10 transformed Whitehall, injecting urgency into the Civil Service’s work and disrupting routines.¹⁹ One of the officials upon whom Churchill came to lean most heavily was Edward Bridges, who discovered that long hours and weekend work were unavoidable in wartime. He was responsible for the War Cabinet Secretariat, which supported over four-hundred committees and sub-committees. Bridges attended all the most secret gatherings, including Cabinet, to record rambling meetings which ran late into the night; he read the most important state papers; he briefed the Prime Minister on a wide range of issues and condensed memoranda destined for Churchill into single-page summaries; and he worked cooperatively with colleagues across Whitehall to resolve interdepartmental disputes.²⁰ Alongside these heavy burdens, Bridges often travelled with Churchill, especially to international conferences. During brief respites from the frantic pace of war, Bridges turned to his ‘cold table’ – a collection of lower-priority subjects, such as the Official War Histories.

One of the best accounts of daily life at the top of Whitehall is Alexander Cadogan’s diary. Cadogan usually walked to the Foreign Office with his minister, Edward Halifax, and arrived after 10.00. He spent long periods in consultations with Halifax, Chamberlain, and deputies to discuss policy options and draft messages. Cadogan spent much of his day tackling the accumulating boxes of files and reading the most important papers, including intelligence files, and rarely finished work before midnight.²¹ He also met callers, including diplomats-on-leave and foreign representatives, although he particularly detested the endless formal lunches and dinners with ministers and dignitaries.²² Once war erupted, Cadogan was one of millions sent scuttling into reinforced basements by air-raid warnings and deprived of much-needed sleep. Desirous of setting an example to his juniors, Cadogan volunteered for fire-watching, a

¹⁷ Addison Papers, Interview with Wilson, 4 April 1967.

¹⁸ John Colville, *Footprints in Time* (London: Collins, 1976), 71-73; 24-25 September 1939 in Kenneth Young (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, Volume II: 1939-1965* (London: Macmillan, 1980), 43.

¹⁹ Colville, *Footprints*, 75-76.

²⁰ ‘Memoirs by Lord Bridges’ in *Action This Day: Working with Churchill*, edited by John Wheeler-Bennett (London: Macmillan, 1968), 224-233; John Winniffrith, ‘Edward Ettingdean Bridges – Baron Bridges, 1892-1969’, *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society*, 16 (1970), 36-56; CAC, BRGS/1/1, f. 44.

²¹ CAC, ACAD/1/7, 27 September 1938.

²² CAC, ACAD/1/7, 18 October 1938.

'tiresome' job of crawling over roofs to perform drills and then sleeping in his office.²³ Cadogan worked closely during the war with both Chamberlain and Churchill as a respected advisor and even began to attend Cabinet.²⁴ Most notably, Cadogan set a travel record as Permanent Under-Secretary, journeying 93,000 miles during the war for international conferences and establishing himself as 'roving diplomatic advisor'.²⁵ From Cairo to Quebec, and Washington to Moscow, he mixed with the world's statesmen while enjoying plentiful food and drink. Cadogan even described the Potsdam Conference of 1945 as a 'holiday' from the heavy, monotonous work of the Foreign Office.²⁶

To a certain extent, Permanent Secretaries' personalities and preferences shaped the rhythms of their work. Far more important in understanding the rhythms of routine were the demands of the roles. This was undeniably true in wartime, when the exigencies of war required Permanent Secretaries to work increasingly long hours and, as demonstrated later in this chapter, in increasingly uncomfortable conditions. In peacetime, there was a culture of mandarins often arriving at the office mid-morning and taking a long lunch. However, this concealed the extent to which the majority of senior officials had to burn the midnight oil to keep pace with the heavy demands of the job.

Whitehall in Technicolour

The giants of Whitehall were homogenous in a specific, and important way: they were all men. As demonstrated later in the chapter, despite the interwar years representing great strides in women's public lives – gaining the vote on equal terms as men in 1928, being elected as Members of Parliament, and joining the junior grades of the Civil Service in considerable numbers – the highest echelons of Whitehall were deliberately closed to them. That Whitehall was a single-sex institution at its apex was reflected in prevailing cultures. There was less homogeneity in class, a marker which is difficult to define although easy to detect. The British are obsessed with class and can

²³ CAC, ACAD/1/10, 26 September and 6 November 1941; ACAD/1/11, 22 September 1942.

²⁴ Keith Neilson and T.G. Otte, *The Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1854-1946* (London: Routledge, 2009), 249-252.

²⁵ CAC, ACAD/1/15, 30 December 1945; FCO Historians, 'The Permanent Under-Secretary of State: A Brief History of the Office and its Holders', *History Notes*, 15 (2002), 30.

²⁶ CAC, ACAD/1/15, 22 August 1945.

tell by sight, or sound, to which drawer a stranger belongs.²⁷ Many Permanent Secretaries were drawn from the middle classes, with a smaller number from aristocratic circles or the working classes. The class ceiling was thus a less rigid barrier than the glass ceiling. Regardless of the circumstances of their birth, the majority had been educated at notable public schools and raised in a genteel world. Those who had not enjoyed a privileged upbringing learned to assimilate through professional socialisation as they climbed the ranks; they sought to ape the behaviours of their social superiors to consolidate their new middle-class status.²⁸ To a considerable extent, a middle-class character permeated the language, behaviour, dress, and leisure activities of the elite Civil Service, while also conditioning their mindsets and assumptions. Within Whitehall, the Foreign Office was perceived as the sanctuary of the most privileged, where members were 'preserved from contamination with other mortals' and was resented for its 'top drawer' and 'superior' attitude.²⁹ However, a cross-departmental examination of elite cultures reveals that the Foreign Office was not so different as it liked to appear.

The Whitehall elite passed their lives in hierarchical institutions, beginning with constrictive and regimented public schools, including Winchester and Rugby. Eton, for example, was divided into 'Collegers' and 'Oppidans', alongside exclusive societies such as 'Pop', and a system of younger boys 'fagging' for older peers.³⁰ Deference and respect were extended towards housemasters and teachers, as well as the eldest and most accomplished students, who assumed leadership roles. Yet this deference was twinned with a self-confidence whereby pupils learned to make themselves equal to those in authority. Public schools alone were believed to prepare boys to lead by instilling values of service, honesty, tradition, independence, and authority.³¹ These qualities were held as being central to the character and work of the Civil Service.³² Like schools, Whitehall was hierarchical. Permanent Secretaries stood at a unique nexus; they were simultaneously at the peak of the Civil Service ladder, and yet themselves subordinate

²⁷ Harold Edward Dale, *The Higher Civil Service of Great Britain* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), 47-8.

²⁸ Simon Heffer, *The Age of Decadence* (London: Random House, 2017), chapter two.

²⁹ TNA, T/162/801, E/45276/3, Wilson to Wood, 18 May and 7 July 1942; CAC, BIMO/Acc 547, Interview with Brimelow, 20 April 1982, f. 14; Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen, *Diplomat in Peace and War* (London: John Murray, 1949), 13.

³⁰ Patrick Joyce, *The State of Freedom: A Social History of the British State since 1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), especially 222; 271-302; Vansittart, *Mist Procession*, 28-29; Oliver Lyttelton, *The Memoirs of Lord Chandos* (London: The Bodley Head, 1962), 1-16.

³¹ John Vaizey, 'The Public Schools', in *The Establishment*, edited by Hugh Thomas (London: Anthony Blond, 1959), 23-46.

³² TNA, T/268/18, Bishop of Peterborough to Oakeshott, 22 September 1951.

to the ministerial hierarchy. By this late stage in their careers, Permanent Secretaries did not necessarily interpret hierarchies and genuflection to authority in terms of obedience. Outward displays of deference were necessary and even Fisher, who was privately unconventional to the extreme, insisted that every courtesy must be paid to ministers; he was thus furious when Vansittart was photographed sitting while his minister stood.³³ Similarly, Cadogan understood the hallowed code that officials must never embarrass ministers. He loyally held his tongue whenever Halifax erred, and discretely corrected his minister's mistakes at the earliest opportunity.³⁴ Permanent Secretaries recognised that ministers were always the senior in the relationship and that they were never to 'give any possible impression of exceeding' their place.³⁵ While mandarins tended towards flattery in public, this was not reflected in private confessions and nor did it indicate a culture of deference in decision-making. Permanent Secretaries were not 'yes men'. Self-confident and tenacious, they pressed their views – sometimes with '*la main trop lourde*' – and could even use indirect, covert tactics in attempts to influence decision-making.³⁶ Anderson was particularly 'fearless' and addressed both colleagues and ministers with the gravitas of a headmaster.³⁷

Language was integral to the Whitehall elite's culture and identity. Civil servants had to master Whitehall's unique language and were to subsume their individual voices to standardised rules, thus contributing to what might be termed the tone of officialdom.³⁸ Clarity and accuracy mattered a great deal in drafting telegrams to distant diplomats and foreign governments, or in recording Cabinet conclusions. Uniformity in language was intended to facilitate clear communication and regulate record-keeping, although it also served to mystify and isolate outsiders who did not speak the Whitehall dialect.³⁹ Only those within the citadel understood the difference between 'full' and 'careful' consideration, how to instruct a bothersome colleague to 'leave it alone' in official language, or when to use the 'full-official' instead of 'semi-official' style.⁴⁰

³³ CAC, OHPN/2, Talks with Robin Fisher, 21 May, 29 June and 30 June 1981.

³⁴ CAC, ACAD/1/8, 25 August 1939.

³⁵ TNA, PRO/30/69/679, Vansittart to MacDonald, 26 August 1933.

³⁶ For example, Peter Neville, 'Sir Alexander Cadogan and Lord Halifax's "Damascus Road" Conversion over the Godesberg Terms, 1938', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 11:3 (2000), 81-90; Vansittart, *Mist Procession*, 399.

³⁷ See his reply to the Foreign Secretary in CRL, AC/54/24, Anderson to Chamberlain, 21 January 1927; John Wheeler-Bennett, *John Anderson: Viscount Waverley* (London: Macmillan, 1962), 2-33.

³⁸ Joyce, *State of Freedom*, 194-196.

³⁹ Lord Strang, *Home and Abroad* (London: Andrew Deutsch, 1956), 271-272; Dale, *Higher Civil Service*, 78.

⁴⁰ Munro, *Fountains in Trafalgar*, 97-104.

Permanent Secretaries were a highly literate class in all aspects of their lives and possessed the necessary linguistic tools of the trade. They were fluent in the language of Whitehall and could express themselves coherently, draft clever compromises, and persuade through argument. One insider confessed that Civil Service language could invade speech as much as writing: 'These habits of speech represent a kind of armour which the Civil Servant puts on ... a kind of costume which he assumes – when he has to play a certain part ... a representative' of the government.⁴¹ Mandarins sometimes found it easy to cast off the 'solemn' and dignified 'costume' as soon as they were able, while others, especially those who wore it for a long time, struggled to remove it. Language thus revealed the tensions between private individuality and professional institutionalisation. Institutionalisation, for instance, ruined Hankey's capacity for vivid, literary descriptions and turned his letters home into perfunctory communiques.⁴² In contrast, Anderson's direct, succinct pattern of speech pre-dated his Whitehall career and was ingrained in his character.⁴³ Similarly, Crowe's lifelong Prussian impulses brought him joy in controlling 'everything under the sun', such as the width of blotting paper, the method of tying tape on a file, and particular phrases used by his subordinates.⁴⁴ It was arguably Vansittart and Fisher who most resisted the deadening hand of standardisation. Fisher continued to use flowery language in correspondence, sending 'fond love' to 'angel' and 'darling' male colleagues.⁴⁵ Vansittart's theatrical and literary style also bled into his professional life. A playwright, poet, and author, Vansittart's long memoranda were typically written in a florid style with metaphors which read like 'dancing literary hornpipes' and which were widely criticised across government.⁴⁶ There was far greater standardisation in speech as the elite spoke in Received Pronunciation.⁴⁷ Scots such as John Anderson, and working-class civil servants, including Horace Wilson, acquired Received Pronunciation in an act of conformity to conceal their backgrounds and play the part. This was necessary, for those who had been born into a world of privilege seized every opportunity to mock accents

⁴¹ Munro, *Fountains in Trafalgar*, 100-103.

⁴² Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets. Volume II, 1919-1931* (London: Collins, 1972), 572-573.

⁴³ For examples, see BL, MSS Eur F 207/26; Bodleian, MS. Eng. c. 7216, Lady Paterson's recollections, 24 March 1959.

⁴⁴ J.D. Gregory, *On the Edge of Diplomacy: Rambles and Reflections, 1902-1928* (London: Hutchinson, 1928), 258-259.

⁴⁵ CRL, NC/8/17/18, Fisher to Chamberlain, 4 February 1932; CAC, HNKY/2/4, Fisher to Hankey, 5 January 1935.

⁴⁶ CAC, ACAD/1/5, 11 September 1936.

⁴⁷ P.J. Grigg, *Prejudice and Judgment* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1948), 21-22.

or the poor man's tendency to 'drop aitches'.⁴⁸ Language thus marked the boundaries of inclusion within the elite microcosm.

Clothes were another marker which delineated inclusion within the Whitehall elite.⁴⁹ Fashion is a highly public form of communication: it expresses values, aspirations, status, power, and respectability.⁵⁰ Clothes made gender, class, and professional hierarchies tangible. Sartorial choices ultimately reflected and reinforced belonging to a group identity and played a significant role in 'self-fashioning' by transforming an individual's mindset and enabling them to embody the values and markers associated with particular garments; in essence, "you are what you wear".⁵¹ Mastering dress codes was of the greatest importance. This was how individuals demonstrated their belonging to the tribe, but also how they interpreted the meaning of others' attire to assign them to the right "drawer". Those raised in a privileged world – those who truly belonged – simply understood dress codes; those who had to ask were not naturally part of the fraternity, and they sought parity in studying codes and adopting the refined clothes of the higher classes. Norman Brook, for instance, 'came up [to Oxford] with a pocket stuffed full of pens. Soon disappeared inside. Learned the tricks'.⁵² The Whitehall elite dressed formally and neatly, as expected of high-ranking and affluent professionals. Moreover, to a considerable extent, conservative, well-to-do dressing underscored the anonymity of elite mandarins.

Their clothes were fairly homogenous: crisp shirts, ties, polished shoes, hats and dark, tailored clothes. This uniform was tweaked within narrow, conservative limits to accommodate personalities and body shapes. By the 1930s, well-fitting single- or double-breasted short coats were popular, worn with either matching or pinstripe trousers (Figure 2.1).⁵³ Indeed, the latter ensemble became so synonymous with Whitehall that it was lampooned by cartoonists (Figure 2.3). Rounded club collars were

⁴⁸ For example, Cadogan: CAC, ACAD/1/15, 23 September 1945; ACAD/7/1, Draft Autobiography. See also Cynthia Gladwyn's comments in CGLA/2/2, 'A Paris Diary'.

⁴⁹ This section relies on photographs from the British press, or in official sittings at the National Portrait Gallery. There are also extensive photographs in private collections, at the Churchill Archives Centre, and at the National Archives (especially T/268/19 and T/268/21). A selection is reproduced here.

⁵⁰ Richard Thompson Ford, *Dress Codes: How the Laws of Fashion Made History* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2021), introduction; Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 7; Laura Ugolini, *Men and Menswear: Sartorial Consumption in Britain, 1880-1939* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 16-21.

⁵¹ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005 edition).

⁵² Ian Beesley, *The Official History of the Cabinet Secretaries* (London: Routledge, 2017), 16.

⁵³ Lady Troubridge, *The Book of Etiquette* (London: Associated Bookbuyers' Co., 1931), 453.

as popular as pointed collars in the office. Although wing-tipped collars were ordinarily reserved for formal occasions, the rigid Anderson frequently favoured them in the office (Figure 2.5). Accessories mattered as much as clothes. The rolled-up umbrella, sometimes draped elegantly over an arm, was as ubiquitous as an attaché case or dispatch box which marked these mandarins as industrious professionals.⁵⁴ Yet hats were the most important accessories and key symbols. Hats were an ‘index to social power’ and closely linked to class; working-class headwear, such as flat caps, were worn only by the lower grades.⁵⁵ The Whitehall elite favoured bowler or Homburg hats (Figure 2.4). Both were semi-formal alternatives to top hats, with the stiffer bowler marked as being a little more formal and exclusively for town.⁵⁶ Neat dress was so important that it was even reported in the national press when Hankey appeared at No. 10 Downing Street with a dented hat on his domed forehead.⁵⁷ Although Hankey was once described as being ‘completely indifferent’ to clothes, this was inaccurate.⁵⁸ Hankey never looked ‘as if he had just come from the tailor’s’, and nor did he fuss with a boutonnière – a particularly potent symbol of elegant masculinity – like Vansittart or Fisher (Figures 2.2 and 2.6).⁵⁹ Yet like all his elite colleagues, Hankey’s clothing choices reflected a very deliberate gender, class, and professional identity.

⁵⁴ CAC, ROSK/7/85, ‘Conferences I attended with Lord Hankey’, 10 January 1967. For an examination of how the umbrella could be an object of masculinity as well as a prop in political theatre, see also Julie V. Gottlieb, ‘Neville Chamberlain’s Umbrella: ‘Object’ Lessons in the History of Appeasement’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 27:3 (2016), 357-388.

⁵⁵ Ariel Beaujot, “‘If you want to get ahead, get a hat’”: Manliness, Power, and Politics via the Top Hat’, *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, 25:2 (2014), 57-88 (57).

⁵⁶ Clair Hughes, ‘Hats On, Hats Off’, *Cultural Studies Review*, 22:1 (2016), 118-143 (124).

⁵⁷ CAC, HNKY/2/4, *Daily Sketch*, 4 April 1933.

⁵⁸ CAC, ROSK/7/80, Benn to Roskill, 5 May 1973.

⁵⁹ Fisher Papers, Extract from ‘Red Tape’, November 1948.



Figure 2.1: *Cadogan, photographed leaving a meeting. Note the short black coat, pinstripe trousers, and attaché case. Pocket watches were more commonplace than wrist watches for men in this period.⁶⁰*

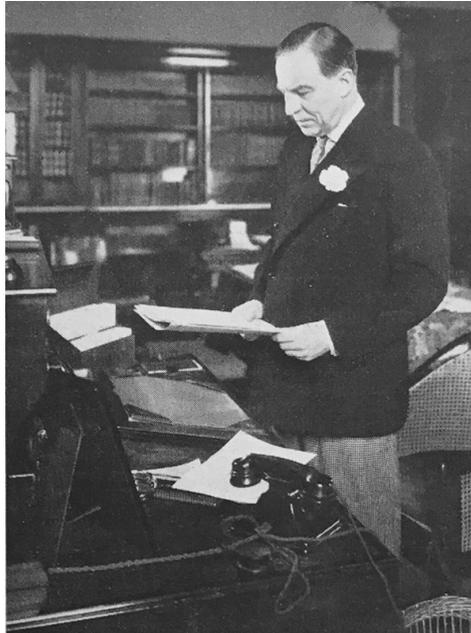


Figure 2.2: *Vansittart, photographed at work, c. late 1930s. His short black coat and patterned trousers are accompanied by a boutonnière, a marker of elegant masculinity.⁶¹*

⁶⁰ CAC, ACAD/2/5, newspaper clipping, 14 September 1938.

⁶¹ CAC, VNST/II/4/1, printed matter.

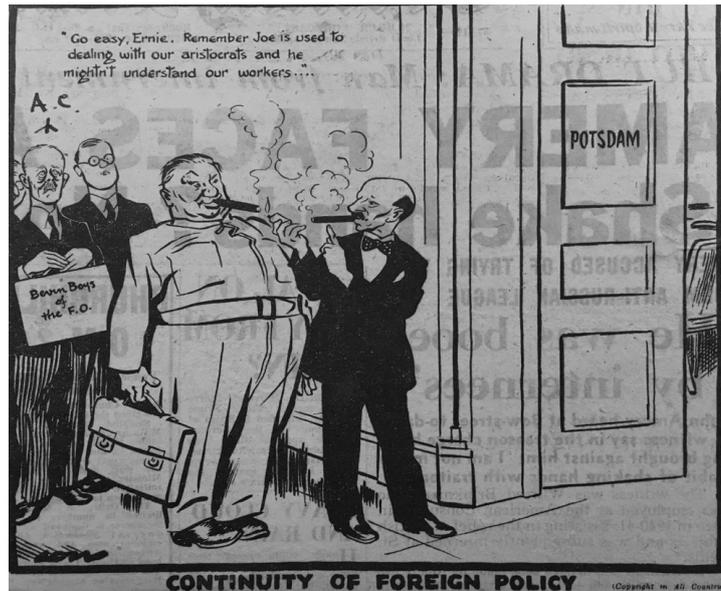


Figure 2.3: The cartoonist lampoons the continuity of foreign policy following the 1945 general election. Far from ushering in a government of ‘workers’, Ernest Bevin and Clement Attlee are shadowed by Alec Cadogan, who is one of the ‘aristocrats’. Cadogan’s clothes – the pinstripe trousers, the starched collar, the short black coat, and the attaché case – are clearly those of the Whitehall elite.⁶²



Figure 2.1: Horace Wilson (left) photographed with Neville Chamberlain (right) at Heston Aerodrome, September 1938. Although smartly attired in a suit and Homburg hat, the working-class Wilson arguably still lacks some of the style and elegance of the Eton-educated Cadogan and Vansittart. Unlike them, Wilson had not mastered the interwar compromise between a lounge suit and morning dress.⁶³

⁶² CAC, ACAD/2/7, David Low’s ‘Continuity of Foreign Policy’, 1945.

⁶³ CAC, ACAD/2/4, newspaper clipping, September 1938.



Figure 2.5: John Anderson, sitting for a portrait in 1939. He is photographed with the formal wing-tipped collars he favoured throughout his life.⁶⁴



Figure 2.6: Warren Fisher, first from right, photographed at the opening of Chiswick Sports Ground with King George V and Prince Albert. Fisher wears a formal bowler hat and carries his umbrella elegantly over his arm. ⁶⁵

⁶⁴ National Portrait Gallery, 'John Anderson, 1st Viscount Waverley by Walter Stoneman, 1939'.

⁶⁵ Fisher Papers, assorted ephemera.



Figure 2.7: Cadogan, photographed in Washington with Frankie, the Halifaxes' dachshund, c. 1944. Pale suits in lighter fabrics were only worn in warm climates, and never in Whitehall.⁶⁶

Dress was intertwined with space and context; specific sartorial codes were tied to locations or occasions.⁶⁷ Morning coats were formal daywear and often completed with a top hat – a symbol that ‘old power structures remained alive and well’ (Figure 2.10).⁶⁸ In the evenings, rules governed black and white tie events. For particularly grand events, such as royal occasions, mandarins’ dress was determined by their department, rank, and honours. Officials who had been awarded a GCB as Knights Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath wore an eye-catching ensemble with the mantle and insignia or star of the Order, and a black velvet plumed hat.⁶⁹ On ‘collar days’, Knights were to display the Order’s collar over their eveningwear. Additionally, senior Foreign Office officials wore an ornate diplomatic uniform, such as at court (Figure 2.8). Gold trims on the dark fabric emphasised rank, while the sash, sword, white gloves, and plumed hat added to the grandeur. On one occasion, Cadogan had rushed to the Palace to present new ambassadors ‘without putting on the appropriate coat’, and while King George VI ‘didn’t mind’ the lapse in wartime, Cadogan ensured he was properly dressed

⁶⁶ CAC, ACAD/2/6, family scrapbook.

⁶⁷ Ugolini, *Men and Menswear*, 22.

⁶⁸ Beaujot, ‘Manliness, Power, and Politics via the Top Hat’, 60; 79.

⁶⁹ Those holding the GCB rank while Permanent Secretaries included Anderson, Bridges, Crowe, Fisher, Hankey, Hopkins, Alexander Maxwell, Brook, and Wilson.

before the next presentation.⁷⁰ Furthermore, Permanent Secretaries enforced unspoken clothing codes amongst their juniors. Hankey castigated those who wore Plus-fours in the office, while Norman Brook cautioned his staff against wearing tweed: such clothes were for the country and golf courses.⁷¹ It required a conscious disregard for the opinions of others, comfort with individuality, and even a hankering for the past to remain aloof from the fashions of the day. Class and generational markers thus intersected in sartorial identities. The Foreign Office, for instance, progressed from the turn-of-the-century tradition of tailcoats and top hats.⁷² Yet Crowe, considerably older than his fellow interwar Permanent Secretaries and having had a German upbringing, cut a 'queer figure dressed all wrong' in a 'very comic Newmarket coat', which had been 'fashionable only in the early eighties' and 'an ancient borsalino hat'.⁷³

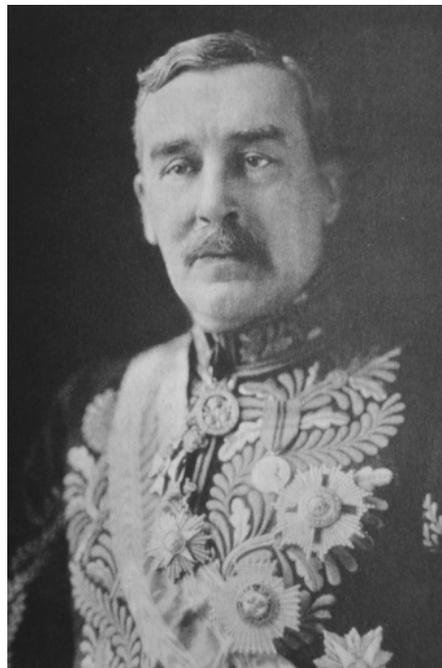


Figure 2.8: Ronald Lindsay photographed in his ceremonial diplomatic uniform. The gold braiding on black fabric exudes imperial grandeur and splendour. Lindsay also wears the stars and insignias of Orders on his left breast.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ CAC, ACAD/8/3, Theodosia's diary, 1943.

⁷¹ 1 April 1933 in Brian Bond (ed.), *Chief of Staff: The Diaries of Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Pownall. Volume I, 1933-1940* (London: Leo Cooper, 1972), 14; Peter Hennessy, *Whitehall* (London: Fontana, 1990), 138-139.

⁷² CAC, VNST/II/4/1, 'The Foreign Office from Inside', Vansittart, *The Listener* (1939), 1351-1353.

⁷³ Gregory, *Edge of Diplomacy*, 259; Vansittart, *Mist Procession*, 46.

⁷⁴ Neilson and Otte, *Permanent Under-Secretary*, 201.



Figure 2.10: The Cabinet Secretary, accompanied by the Prime Minister (Ramsay MacDonal) in his Privy Councillor's uniform. The morning coat and top hat were very formal attire.⁷⁵

Throughout their lives, the Whitehall elite inhabited many of the same physical spaces, from public schools and Oxbridge colleges to grand offices and gentlemen's clubs. Space aligned with status, identity, and power. Jack Brown's recent study of the geography of power explores how access and proximity to powerful individuals were important resources at officials' fingertips.⁷⁶ Yet, as subsequent chapters demonstrate, proximity between mandarins and ministers was not always straightforward. Rather than necessarily determining influence, the architecture of power reflected and reinforced hierarchies. During this period, the Foreign Office and Home Office resided in the same Italianate-style and imposing building, although the Foreign Office quarter was much grander than the more functional Home Office section.⁷⁷ The Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office resided in a grand office overlooking Horse Guards Parade and Downing Street, and directly above was the Foreign Secretary's room. That Vansittart insisted on retaining the office when he was removed from the post of Permanent Under-Secretary in 1938 reveals an abortive effort to cling to the

⁷⁵ CAC, HNKY/2/4, *Daily Sketch*, 20 November 1935.

⁷⁶ Jack Brown, *The Geography of Power at Downing Street* (London: Haus Publishing, 2019).

⁷⁷ History of King Charles Street', *Government History Blog* [online], available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/history/king-charles-street>.

status embodied in the room, while denying it to his successor. The grand office also represented stability and tradition as much as status: Permanent Under-Secretaries supplied signed photographs to hang in the office's 'Rogues' Gallery', and thus even after their departure, traces of elite mandarins continued to inhabit the space and to emphasise the importance of continuity.⁷⁸

The Treasury was a similarly imposing building. Situated behind No. 10, its Portland stone façade and Ionic columns were topped with an entablature and pediment carved with symbols of regal grandeur.⁷⁹ Fisher occupied a corner office, overlooking the Downing Street garden and Horse Guards Parade, which reinforced his status to visitors with high ceilings, wood panelling, and marble. Between 1939 and 1940, Fisher's successor occupied two of the most important spaces in Whitehall. Wilson installed himself in Fisher's grand office while also working from a small room in No. 10, through which everyone wishing to see Chamberlain had to pass.⁸⁰ Churchill's arrival in Downing Street and bomb damage to the Treasury during the Blitz necessitated wholesale relocation for Wilson. From 1940, the Treasury resided at the Government Offices on Great George Street, an outwardly imposing building next to the Foreign Office, which the disenchanted Wilson found dark, 'dirty', and 'soulless'.⁸¹ Unsurprisingly, Wilson furnished his office with comforts of a bygone age: 'two enormous photographs ... one of Baldwin and the other Chamberlain'.⁸² In contrast to his colleagues, Hankey's office was concealed behind an unassuming façade. Whitehall Gardens was a 'quiet little backwater' which accommodated the Cabinet Office in a series of terraced houses looking out over the Thames.⁸³ Yet appearances could be deceiving: Hankey's office was luxuriously furnished, from the large fireplace and ornate mouldings to a chandelier. His successor, Bridges, briefly resided at the Cabinet Office's Richmond Terrace premises from 1938 to 1940, until air raid damage necessitated relocation to the Government Offices on Great George Street. Its basement housed the

⁷⁸ CAC, VNST/II/1/9, Vansittart to Cadogan, 25 October 1942.

⁷⁹ Montagu H. Cox and G. T. Forrest (eds), *Survey of London: Volume 14. St Margaret, Westminster. Part III: Whitehall II* (London: London County Council, 1931), 11-36.

⁸⁰ Kenneth Clark, *Another Part of the Wood: A Self Portrait* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 271.

⁸¹ Wilson to Streat, 10 January 1941 in Marguerite Dupree (ed.), *Lancashire and Whitehall: The Diary of Sir Raymond Streat. Volume II: 1939-57* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 49-50.

⁸² 5 March 1942 in Ben Pimlott (ed.), *The Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton, 1940-45* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1986), 389-390.

⁸³ Montagu H. Cox and Philip Norman (eds), *Survey of London: Volume 13. St Margaret, Westminster. Part II: Whitehall I* (London: London County Council, 1930), 95-100; 209-210; Hastings Ismay, *The Memoirs of General the Lord Ismay* (London: Heinemann, 1960), 44; CAC, BRGS/1/1, Memoir, f. 18.

subterranean, reinforced War Cabinet Rooms. Here, and in the No. 10 Annexe, politicians and officials worked and slept in dingy rooms. Seniority was denoted by occupation of single, rather than shared, accommodation, as well as the quality of sparse, functional furnishings. Bridges's relatively large room, complete with a single iron bed (rather than a camp bed), a substantial desk, and runner carpet, was plush by comparison to other officials' accommodation. Wartime Permanent Secretaries thus tended to occupy less grand and more functional space than their predecessors. They also had to operate under the physical and psychological strain of aerial bombardment, including sleep deprivation.

Living spaces also reflected mandarins' identities. Those who resided in London clustered in affluent boroughs popular with professionals; they took flats in Marylebone (Hopkins and Fisher), Chelsea (Crowe and Norman Brook), or South Kensington (Wilson). Notable exceptions were Vansittart (Mayfair), and Cadogan and Ronald Lindsay (Belgravia), whose addresses reflected their considerable family wealth. Car ownership was widespread amongst elite mandarins, reflecting a broader age of consumerism and motoring for affluent classes.⁸⁴ As well as the immense townhouse where he entertained politicians, royalty, and dignitaries, Vansittart kept a grand mansion in Buckinghamshire and a chauffeur. Similarly, Cadogan motored to his country cottage for weekends, as did Horace Wilson, who kept a large house in Surrey and enjoyed escaping the city for village life.⁸⁵ Surrey was a popular location, where Alexander Maxwell, Hankey, and Anderson bought large houses relatively cheaply and commuted to London each day.

Shared social spaces also reflected dominant cultures. Clubland was the area around St James's and Pall Mall, where gentlemen's clubs clustered. There was no single 'Whitehall club'. Most popular among the mandarins were the Athenaeum, Brooks's, St James's, and Traveller's, although the Reform Club, United Service Club, and United University Club were also patronised by these Permanent Secretaries. Each club possessed a unique identity tied to members' affluence, academic backgrounds, political leanings, and intellectual interests, and was regimented by strict rules which governed entry, membership, dress, and behaviour.⁸⁶ Clubs were highly sociable institutions

⁸⁴ Martin Pugh, *We Danced All Night: A Social History of Britain Between the Wars* (London: Vintage, 2009), chapter twelve.

⁸⁵ 26 July 1935 in Marguerite Dupree, (ed.), *Lancashire and Whitehall: The Diary of Sir Raymond Street. Volume I: 1931-39* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 396-399.

⁸⁶ Seth Alexander Thévoz, *Club Government: How the Early Victorian World was Ruled from London Clubs* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018), 3-5.

where members rubbed shoulders beyond narrow departmental and professional confines. Men frequented their clubs to lunch and dine, entertain friends and colleagues, change into evening wear so that they were never improperly clothed, play cards, and gossip. Clubland should not be understood merely as a space where officials gathered to plot and network; instead, clubs reflected affluent class behaviours and leisure.

While the heavy demands of work often disrupted mandarins' social lives, they enjoyed a range of leisure activities beyond clubland. These conspicuously middle-class games – tennis, golf, cricket – reflected the popularity of sport during the interwar period.⁸⁷ They did not partake of the working-class sport of football, and nor did they tend to participate in upper-class pursuits of hunting, riding, skiing, or fishing.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, leisure was often intellectual.⁸⁹ Crowe was an accomplished pianist and composer. Hankey loved Italian opera and Cadogan enjoyed a busy calendar of theatre, opera, and art. Elite officials were voracious readers: Crowe devoured masterpieces of ancient and modern literature, philosophy, science, and history.⁹⁰ Fisher loved popular thrillers and his taste for low culture is surprising. He returned to his Marylebone flat in the evenings to sip a glass of port and shout with laughter as he played gramophone records of Lancashire comedians and vaudevilles. In contrast, Anderson preferred newspapers to novels, which he thought frivolous. Indeed, behind Anderson's forbidding exterior he was a keen gardener who kept bees and, astonishingly, learned to tango. Family life occupied elite mandarins to different extents. The vast majority were married, although Anderson was widowed, and Fisher separated. Class was often refracted through the marriage market. Cadogan, son of an Earl, married the daughter of an Earl; Horace Wilson, son of a furniture maker, married a farmer's daughter. Vansittart greatly augmented his social capital when he married an heiress after the death of his wealthy first wife. Except Robert Russell Scott, Ronald Lindsay, and Norman Brook, all in this cohort had children. These children were often adolescents or adults by the time their fathers had reached the apex of Whitehall; they inhabited many of the country's most notable public schools or universities, and several sons even followed their fathers into the Civil Service or similar middle-class professions.

⁸⁷ Pugh, *We Danced All Night*, chapter fourteen.

⁸⁸ Vansittart, *Mist Procession*, 101; 111.

⁸⁹ CAC, ROSK/7/85, 'Notes for Captain Roskill', 5 January 1966; ACAD/1/12, 29 December 1943; Bodleian, MS. Eng. d. 2908, Wilkinson's account of Crowe; MS. Eng. c. 7216, Jamieson to Wheeler-Bennett, 6 January 1960; O'Halpin, *Head of the Civil Service*, 7-8; Ann Bridge, *Permission to Resign: Goings-on in the Corridors of Power* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1971), 131.

⁹⁰ Bodleian, MS. Eng. d. 2909, Crowe's 'list of books read'.

By the early twentieth-century, religion played a declining role in individuals' lives.⁹¹ The Whitehall elite were all white, Christian men, and this strongly coloured the unspoken assumptions which governed their thoughts and actions. Although Whitehall was a Christian world, Permanent Secretaries did not all belong to the same creeds or denominations. Bridges was a Quaker, Hankey an Anglican, and Anderson a Presbyterian. Nor did they all practice religion as regular churchgoers to the same extent. There was, moreover, a very small minority of Catholics within the Whitehall hierarchy, including Tyrrell. The negative impact of Catholicism on Eric Drummond's career has already been discussed in chapter one. Horace Wilson also appears to have been Catholic, if recollections of him attending St Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Chorley are accurate.⁹² While Catholics were not formally forbidden from entering and rising in the Civil Service, antipathy towards Catholics in the form of 'cordial ... hostility' was likely widespread.⁹³ It has also been suggested that Catholicism was closely identified in the minds of the Establishment with anti-English Popery and was thus tied to notions of race and nationalism. This xenophobia was similarly true of anti-Semitism. With the exception of Eric Drummond, there is no evidence to suggest that anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism were overt in hiring or in promotions. This is not to deny that covert prejudices and practices likely prevailed and, indeed, contributed to the narrow religious diversity.

It is through an examination of emotion that the greatest shades of diversity appear. Like many generations before them, the behaviour of elite mandarins in this period was conditioned by strong normative tendencies and closely tied to class and gender identities. The lingering Victorian ideal of upper middle-class gentlemanly conduct, especially when representing King and country, was decorum and emotional restraint.⁹⁴ In emulating this social code, mandarins became bicephalic, juggling professional and private faces. The pressure to conceal emotions could make officials appear overly aloof, perhaps nurturing the resilient and frequently inaccurate stereotype of unfeeling, dry automatons.⁹⁵ Anderson perhaps most closely emulated the

⁹¹ Heffer, *Age of Decadence*, chapter six; Pugh, *We Danced All Night*, chapter one.

⁹² Cato, *Guilty Men* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1940), 86-90.

⁹³ Youssef Taouk, 'The Roman Catholic Church in Britain during the First World War: A Study of Political Leadership' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Western Sydney, 2003), especially 204-205.

⁹⁴ Heffer, *Age of Decadence*, especially chapter fourteen. For an intriguing exposition of dominant codes of masculine emotional culture in the world of politics, see Martin Francis, 'Tears, Tantrums, and Bared Teeth: The Emotional Economy of Three Conservative Prime Ministers, 1951-1963', *Journal of British Studies*, 41:3 (2002), 354-387.

⁹⁵ For instance, Cadogan described in John Charmley, *Churchill: The End of Glory. A Political Biography* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1993), 448.

stereotype of the serious mandarin in public. He refuted frivolity and conducted himself with such decorum that he appeared ‘dull’, aloof, and condescending. This, however, was not the sum of the man. He suffered from a shy temperament and was equally unfortunate that his Scottish sense of humour went undetected by most.⁹⁶ Moreover, his second wife, Ava Wigram, discovered that underneath the forbidding exterior lurked a volcano of ‘*grande émotion*’.⁹⁷ Anderson was not alone in suffering from a shy temperament and a difficulty ‘in making human contacts’, although Bridges skilfully concealed his introverted personality with an extroverted shell. Contemporaries had fond memories of Bridges ‘forever bubbling into an almost boisterous gaiety’, with a ‘boyish approach to life (which usually took the form of punching one playfully in the tummy)’. On one occasion, ‘walking up the entrance lobby of No. 10’, Bridges pitched ‘his rather battered hat towards one of the solemn messengers with the shout “Catch!”’.⁹⁸ Horace Wilson also struggled with the interplay between public and private selves. Wilson, who spoke with a quiet, drawling voice and possessed an understated sense of humour, exhibited a chilly character to most who knew him.⁹⁹ He concealed his warmer depths from view, and it was only Neville Chamberlain’s death which cracked Wilson’s emotionless public façade: Wilson lingered at the funeral, ‘his face contracted with grief, praying for his dead friend’.¹⁰⁰

The tension between public and private selves is arguably clearest in diaries. Second only to Anderson in his calm, unruffled demeanour was Cadogan. To critics and admirers alike, Cadogan’s ‘composure’, level-headedness, and imperturbability were a great comfort in crises.¹⁰¹ Equally, there was no quality which Cadogan admired more in others than level-headedness: he despised ‘histrionic’, sensitive, and excitable

⁹⁶ Edward Bridges, ‘John Anderson, Viscount Waverley, 1882-1958’, *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society*, 4 (1958), 306-325 (308); 14 March 1944 in Pimlott (ed.), *Dalton Diary*, 722-723; Lyttelton, *Memoirs*, 297-298; Wheeler-Bennett, *Waverley*, 66; CAC, OHPN/1, Paice to O’Halpin, 4 November 1981; BRGS/1/3, Burgis to Churchill, 28 March 1963.

⁹⁷ Bodleian, MS. Eng. c. 6661, ‘Ava’s Account’.

⁹⁸ TNA, T/268/21, Armstrong’s appreciation of Bridges for *Public Administration* (1969); Stuart to Armstrong, 12 November 1969; Colville, *Footprints in Time*, 92-93; 22 June 1941 in John Colville, *The Fringes of Power: Downing Street Diaries, 1939-1955* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985), 405.

⁹⁹ W.J. Brown, *So Far...* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1943), 220.

¹⁰⁰ CUL, Baldwin 174/294, Wilson to Baldwin, 10 November 1940; CAC, LWFD/2/2, 7 December 1940; 14 December 1940 in Robert Rhodes James (ed.), *Chips: The Diaries of Sir Henry Channon* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), 276.

¹⁰¹ 21 December 1942 in John Harvey (ed.), *The War Diaries of Oliver Harvey, 1941-1945* (London: Collins, 1978), 202; 31 March 1938 in Young (ed.), *Lockhart Diaries: Volume I*, 389; Harold Macmillan, *The Blast of War, 1939-1945* (London: Macmillan, 1967), 430; Borthwick Institute for Archives, York [hereafter Borthwick], HALIFAX/A4/410/4/16, Halifax to Cadogan, 5 May 1944.

behaviour.¹⁰² Cadogan's reserve and dry, sarcastic wit cultivated a belief that he was a 'colourless ... dry old stick', who had 'buried emotions in the refrigerator of his soul'.¹⁰³ Cadogan's diaries astonished contemporaries when published because he had so successfully masked the 'volcano' of frustration and despair beneath his 'cool and calm exterior'.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, Hankey's diary colourises his seemingly frigid personality. Both Cadogan and Hankey used diaries as cathartic receptacles for pent-up emotions to sustain their professional exteriors. Their diaries therefore speak to a culture of emotional suppression. In public, Hankey was almost universally regarded as a humourless, emotionless arch-bureaucrat.¹⁰⁵ On hearing that his brother had died, Hankey is reputed to have turned to his stenographer and said, 'Well, Donald's gone – where was I?'¹⁰⁶ While his children recalled that it was 'not done' to show emotion in the family, they also shared fond memories of their father's sense of humour and his affection for his wife.¹⁰⁷

However, not all Permanent Secretaries were so introverted nor possessed such great self-control in the division of their public and private faces. Robert Russell Scott, for example, struggled to tread the thin line between impish fun and conduct unbecoming: he was accused of lacking the decorum expected of an elite official when he pushed spectators into the water at a Home Office swimming gala and was likewise criticised for telling 'lewd and obscene' stories at a retirement dinner.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, it was the deeply emotional and volatile personalities of Vansittart and Fisher which were the greatest antitheses of reserved, restrained officials. Emotional and volatile, Fisher was unconventional to the extreme. He felt no awkwardness in being demonstrative and longed to humanise the Civil Service.¹⁰⁹ Fisher struggled to regulate his emotions; intense and grossly affectionate personal and professional relationships were marred by violent and permanent rifts, and his natural propensity for making enemies was no doubt furthered by his outspoken, sarcastic quips against colleagues

¹⁰² CAC, ACAD/1/7, 24 August 1938; ACAD/1/8, 18 August 1939; ACAD/1/9, 31 December 1940; ACAD/1/10, 9 May and 26 May 1941.

¹⁰³ CAC, BIMO/Acc 547, Interview with Brimelow, 20 April 1982, f. 19; VNST/II/5/2, 'Those Permanent Heads' clipping, 2 October 1940, 6-7; ACAD/1/9, 20 May 1940; 14 May 1941 in Colville, *Fringes of Power*, 388.

¹⁰⁴ H.G. Jebb, *The Memoirs of Lord Gladwyn* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), ix.

¹⁰⁵ CAC, ROSK/7/93, Sylvester to Roskill, 8 October 1968.

¹⁰⁶ CAC, ROSK/7/90, 'Burgis on Hankey, 1967'; Burgis to Roskill 23 July 1971.

¹⁰⁷ CAC, ROSK/7/85, Ursula to Roskill, 28 June 1970; ROSK/7/80, Christopher to Roskill, undated.

¹⁰⁸ CAC, WELL/Acc. 115, Memoir.

¹⁰⁹ Bridge, *Permission to Resign*, 90-96; Fisher Papers, W.J. Brown, 'Sir Warren Fisher, A Great Civil Servant Retires'.

and ministers.¹¹⁰ Vansittart managed himself a little better. Sociable and imaginative, Vansittart's good humour was equalled by his empathy to the struggles of those less fortunate than himself.¹¹¹ However, he was impulsive and emotional – to the degree that he suffered with depression, insomnia, and anxiety, and was often taken in by those who preyed on his nerves and sensitivities.¹¹² Such emotions were not restricted to his private self. He wept 'a good deal' at funerals and was outspoken about the emotional upheavals which had plagued his life in his autobiography, including the hammer blow of his brother's death, when he had lurched to the trees on the Mall and 'sobbed my heart out'.¹¹³ In refusing to conceal emotions or to equate emotion with shame, Vansittart rejected the Victorian ideal of gentlemanly behaviour. The contrast between Vansittart and colleagues like Anderson and Cadogan reveals the wider cultural discourse surrounding temperament and national identity. Cadogan's reserve was described as 'very English' – or, rather, the Englishness which Britons preferred to recognise in themselves – and juxtaposed against the volatile and unstable 'Latin' vein of Vansittart's temperament.¹¹⁴

Principles in Practice: Professional Ethics

The ideal of an ethical, incorruptible Civil Service acting solely in the public interest was integral to British exceptionalism.¹¹⁵ To take the cynic's attitude, being a 'good chap' and playing by the rules of the game were more important than capabilities and achievements.¹¹⁶ Much of our understanding of professional ethics within Whitehall hinges on lamentably one-dimensional scholarship which regurgitates high-sounding principles with little reference to empirical evidence.¹¹⁷ Ethics were particularly

¹¹⁰ CAC, OHPN/2, Talk with Robin Fisher, 21 May 1981; Kenneth Young (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, Volume II: 1939-1965* (London: Macmillan, 1980), 21.

¹¹¹ Vansittart, *Mist Procession*, 298; 421-422.

¹¹² Norman Rose, *Vansittart: Study of a Diplomat* (London: Heinemann, 1978), 9; 72-75; Vansittart, *Mist Procession*, 28-29; 27 March 1936 in Charles Stuart (ed.), *The Reith Diaries* (London: Collins, 1975), 210.

¹¹³ 25 October 1935 in Ben Pimlott (ed.), *The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton, 1918-40, 1945-60* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1986), 190; Vansittart, *Mist Procession*, 146.

¹¹⁴ CAC, ACAD/2/7, *Sunday Despatch* clipping, 3 February 1946; Frederick Leith-Ross, *Money Talks: Fifty Years of International Finance. The Autobiography of Sir Frederick Leith-Ross* (London: Hutchinson, 1968), 159-160.

¹¹⁵ Peter Hennessy, *The Hidden Wiring: Unearthing the British Constitution* (London: Indigo, 1996), 124-5

¹¹⁶ Clive Ponting, *Whitehall: Tragedy and Farce* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1986), 29.

¹¹⁷ For example, David Richards and Martin J. Smith, 'The Public Service Ethos and the Role of the British Civil Service', *West European Politics*, 23:3 (2000), 45-66; Sylvia Horton, 'The Public

important to Fisher who, as Head of the Civil Service, patrolled zealously to root out conduct unbecoming. His successor, Bridges, placed equal emphasis on the importance of honesty. It was expected that Permanent Secretaries would live by a code of good conduct and lead by example; these high-sounding principles were tested throughout the interwar years. It was only in 1928 that the hitherto unwritten code of behaviour and standards was formalised.¹¹⁸ Officials were to dedicate their undivided allegiance to the State; to maintain confidences; to remain silent in public life and never indulge in party politics; to remain disinterested advisors to ministers; to impartially execute ministers' chosen policy; to behave honestly and never abuse trust; not to use their official positions to further their private interests; and to ensure that their private activities did not discredit the Civil Service. There were grey areas and Permanent Secretaries sometimes crossed the line. They could, and did, range beyond the confines of their roles. This occasionally took the form of especially intimate relationships with particular politicians, or highly assertive and even aggressive overt and covert activities to influence policymaking.¹¹⁹ Discretion was vital and while 'gassing' indiscreetly with outsiders was heavily frowned upon, even elite mandarins were guilty of indiscretions from time to time, such as making 'pungent' or 'outspoken' comments about ministers to confidants.¹²⁰ Yet sly intriguing and gossiping were very different to corruption – such as bribery or embezzlement – for self-interested purposes.¹²¹ Good conduct was central to culture at the apex of Whitehall. Fisher was not wrong in sermonising that while 'the public often think we are stupid and dilly dallies and bureaucrats ... we are pretty straight'.¹²²

The Francs scandal of 1928 centred on the Foreign Office. It was a severe blow to the Civil Service – 'which is supposed to be, and claims to be, immaculate' – when a group of mandarins were accused of using official information for currency speculation.¹²³ The matter was referred to a Board of Inquiry composed of Fisher, Malcolm Ramsay (Controller and Auditor-General), and Maurice Gwyer (Solicitor to the Treasury). Following the inquiry, J.D. Gregory (Assistant Under-Secretary) was

Service Ethos in the British Civil Service: An Historical Institutional Analysis', *Public Policy and Administration*, 21:1 (2006), 32-48.

¹¹⁸ A copy is in TNA, T/273/158, Principles Regulating the Conduct of Civil Servants, 13 March 1928.

¹¹⁹ Deceptively, one insider strenuously denied this, Dale, *Higher Civil Service*, 137-140.

¹²⁰ October 1935 and 20 July 1936 in Stuart (ed.), *Reith Diaries*, 122; 212; CAC, ACAD/1/7, 5 April 1938.

¹²¹ Dale, *Higher Civil Service*, 102-106; Douglas Jay, *Change and Fortune: A Political Record* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 141.

¹²² TNA, T/281/13, 15 February 1928 testimony.

¹²³ CAC, HNKY/3/35, Hankey to Robin, 6 February 1928.

dismissed from the Foreign Office, while Owen O'Malley was made to resign.¹²⁴ O'Malley denied wrongdoing and worked with his supporters in the Foreign Office to petition for his case to be reconsidered.¹²⁵ Lady O'Malley targeted Fisher, who patiently heard her arguments. The two grew close as Fisher arranged for a stay of execution while the matter was reconsidered. Fisher engaged a wide circle of ministerial and mandarin actors, including the Prime Minister (Stanley Baldwin), the Foreign Secretary (Austen Chamberlain), and the Permanent Under-Secretary (William Tyrrell). Fisher urged Tyrrell and Chamberlain to summon a panel to reconsider O'Malley's situation, although Tyrrell was 'sticky', and it was Lady O'Malley who persuaded Tyrrell to be merciful. Fisher corralled the panel and gained their support for an olive branch, which Tyrrell and Baldwin were then induced to approve. The mercy which Fisher showed to O'Malley during the Francs scandal is questionable given his rectitude during the Bullock case of 1936. The explanation may lie in his fondness for women. Although Fisher denied that he was motivated by the 'beaux yeux' and Lady O'Malley naturally refuted that there was anything between them, Fisher's extensive social and private engagements with Lady O'Malley cultivated rumours that he was behaving inappropriately for an official of his standing.¹²⁶

The Bullock case of 1936 was the most important and most revealing test of professional ethics. Christopher Bullock was Permanent Under-Secretary to the Air Ministry. Nicknamed 'Napoleon', Bullock's temper, forceful manner, and ambition made him unpopular.¹²⁷ Fisher disliked his colleague's propensity for meddling and felt that Bullock was 'a very clever young man, but most argumentative and singularly gifted in rubbing people up the wrong way; he never knows when to stop nor the limits of his own and other people's affairs'.¹²⁸ There were a number of skirmishes between Fisher and Bullock, including one occasion when Fisher cautioned Bullock against disloyalty to his minister and warned that any future 'deviation from loyalty ... will be met with summary dismissal'.¹²⁹ Then, in June 1936, the Chairman of Imperial Airways (Eric Geddes) approached Fisher with concerns which Fisher took to the Secretary of State for Air (Lord Londonderry) and the Prime Minister (Baldwin).¹³⁰ Bullock was accused

¹²⁴ TNA, T/281/3, Ramsay to Fisher, 30 March 1928.

¹²⁵ Bridge, *Permission to Resign*, 25-131. This account by Lady O'Malley (who published under the pseudonym of 'Ann Bridge') is problematic and claims should be treated with caution. However, the broad narrative – that Fisher assisted Lady O'Malley and pleaded for a more merciful judgement for her husband – is truthful.

¹²⁶ Bridge, *Permission to Resign*, 69; 109; 117; 128-9.

¹²⁷ O'Halpin, *Head of the Civil Service*, 208-209.

¹²⁸ TNA, T/161/624, Fisher to Chamberlain, 3 February 1934.

¹²⁹ TNA, T/273/156, Fisher to Londonderry, 8 December 1934.

¹³⁰ TNA, T/273/157, Fisher's Evidence, 10 July 1936.

of trading an honour for Geddes in the hope that he, Bullock, would succeed Geddes as Chairman of Imperial Airways. In a series of meetings, Geddes had warned Bullock against inappropriate contact while their respective organisations were in contract negotiations on the Air Mail Agreement. Bullock, however, had continued to press his ambitions on Geddes. Bullock was also accused of approaching George Woods-Humphrey, the Managing Director of Imperial Airways, on the same subject and immediately after a meeting on the Air Mail Agreement.¹³¹ Bullock strenuously denied wrongdoing. While Fisher's earlier encounters with Bullock certainly coloured his perceptions, Fisher's forensic interrogation of the evidence nevertheless convincingly demonstrated that Bullock's defence read 'like Alice in Wonderland'.¹³² Bullock's behaviour had been inappropriate at best. His activities were in sharp contrast to John Anderson's. Approached by none other than Eric Geddes with an unsolicited offer of employment a decade prior, Anderson had informed Fisher and engaged in transparent exchanges, reflecting his more principled character.¹³³

Fisher and Horace Wilson were in complete agreement that Bullock's activities violated the Civil Service's ethos. At their suggestion, Baldwin summoned a secret Board of Inquiry, including Richard Hopkins, Second Secretary to the Treasury.¹³⁴ During proceedings, Hopkins confided to Fisher his suspicion that Bullock had acted similarly with another businessman, and the Head of the Civil Service discussed these concerns with ministers.¹³⁵ The inquiry concluded that Bullock had acted improperly, while adding that Bullock had failed to understand the way in which his activities had been perceived.¹³⁶ Although ignorance was no defence and Bullock was dismissed, Baldwin was heartened that 'grave as was the offence from a Service point of view, no question of corruption is involved'.¹³⁷ Bullock begged to be allowed to resign; he felt that the harshest penalty was unwarranted as he had not been found guilty of corruption and pleaded that he would never escape the stigma of dismissal.¹³⁸ Baldwin and Swinton discussed the matter with Fisher and Wilson and subsequently agreed that the sentence must stand.¹³⁹ The announcement shocked Whitehall and Westminster alike.

¹³¹ TNA, T/273/156, Swinton to Bullock, 23 June 1936.

¹³² TNA, T/273/156, Bullock's memorandum, 23 June 1936.

¹³³ BL, MSS Eur F 207/27, Anderson – Geddes correspondence, 1925

¹³⁴ TNA, T/273/156, Swinton to Prime Minister, 29 June 1936; Wilson to Fisher, 3 July 1936; T/273/157, Minutes of evidence, July 1936.

¹³⁵ TNA, T/273/158, Hopkins to Fisher, 14 July 1936; T/273/159, Fisher to Baldwin, 25 July 1936.

¹³⁶ TNA, PREM/8/1143, Report, 25 July 1936.

¹³⁷ House of Commons, Command Paper 5255, 'Minute by the Prime Minister', 28 July 1936.

¹³⁸ TNA, T/273/159, Bullock to Baldwin, 29 July 1936.

¹³⁹ TNA, T/273/159, Fisher's minute, 29 July 1936.

Immediately, rumours of a conspiracy against Bullock emerged and, wallowing in self-pity, Bullock took comfort in such notions. One minister, for instance, claimed that Bullock had been 'hounded' by 'the inveterate hatred' of Fisher.¹⁴⁰ When Samuel Findlater Stewart (Permanent Under-Secretary for India) challenged the verdict, Fisher laid bare the depth of his feeling as a 'trustee' of the Civil Service's reputation and warned Stewart that to moderate Bullock's punishment would be a 'betrayal of our Service and all it should stand for'.¹⁴¹ Fisher undoubtedly lacked sympathy for Bullock, especially given the man's previous infractions.¹⁴² Yet he was certain that Bullock should not receive favourable treatment as an elite official, and instead asserted that the greatest responsibility carried 'the severest penalty'.¹⁴³ Bullock grew increasingly belligerent in the late 1930s as he sought new employment, only to discover that Fisher was sabotaging his efforts. Fisher's successor as Head of the Civil Service, Horace Wilson, engaged in similar intrigues to put Bullock 'off the map'.¹⁴⁴

Bullock's long, controversial campaign for redress stretched into the post-war period and revealed divisions among elite officials. He secured the backing of several elite officials who took a very different view to Fisher and Wilson. The majority believed that while 'much can be said against Bullock's conduct (though he himself still seems to be unaware of that)', dismissal had given the misleading impression that Bullock had acted dishonestly.¹⁴⁵ Some were even convinced – like Bullock himself – that the inquiry had been mishandled.¹⁴⁶ By 1947, even Baldwin and Swinton had expressed their 'considerable misgivings' with Bullock's dismissal and supported a petition calling on the Attlee government to reconsider the case. The petition was signed by twelve civil servants, including Hankey, Vansittart, and P.J. Grigg.¹⁴⁷ It fell to Bridges to advise ministers. When the Lord Chancellor (Lord Jowitt) ruled in favour of the original report, Bridges strongly supported a compromise in the form of a statement acknowledging the undue severity of the punishment. Bullock histrionically rejected the olive branch.¹⁴⁸ Bullock relaunched his campaign in 1948 with the support of five distinguished

¹⁴⁰ Fisher Papers, 'Downfall of Bullock', Montgomery Hyde, clipping 23 June 1972.

¹⁴¹ TNA, T/273/159, Fisher to Findlater-Stewart, 1 August 1936.

¹⁴² CRL, NC/7/11/29/30, Fisher to Chamberlain, 18 June 1936.

¹⁴³ TNA, T/273/159, Fisher to Findlater-Stewart, 1 August 1936.

¹⁴⁴ CUL, Templewood X/File 4, Fisher to Hoare and Wilson to Hoare, 12 April 1939; TNA, T/273/161, Bullock to Wilson, 7 May 1939; Wilson to Salter, 8 May 1939; Wilson minute, 10 May 1939.

¹⁴⁵ TNA, T/273/161, Carter to Bridges, 21 April 1947.

¹⁴⁶ TNA, T/273/161, Bullock to Bridges, 19 April 1947.

¹⁴⁷ TNA, T/273/161, Baldwin to Attlee, and Swinton to Attlee, 21 April 1947.

¹⁴⁸ TNA, T/273/161, Bridges note, 6 June 1947; Lord Chancellor to Prime Minister, 15 August 1947; CAC, VNST/II/1/31, Bullock to Vansittart, 14 August 1948.

Permanent Secretaries, including Hankey and Vansittart, although his petulant temperament began to erode goodwill among his own supporters and in the Attlee government.¹⁴⁹ Bridges was internally divided: he privately believed that Fisher had been 'impulsive' in handling the Bullock inquiry, while recognising that Bullock was entirely unfit for service.¹⁵⁰

As Bullock's campaign dragged on, Bridges became particularly insulted by Bullock's repeated claims that the Head of the Civil Service was misleading Attlee on the 'facts' of the case, as well as thinly veiled attacks at how the 'machine' could 'wriggle collectively rather than frankly admit a proven mistake'.¹⁵¹ Bullock entirely misjudged Bridges's intentions. Morality, truth, and propriety were the backbone of Bridges's character.¹⁵² He was also a pragmatic fixer who was eager to prevent the protracted affair consuming his time. In 1949, Bridges sought to bring an end to Bullock's campaign. He imposed on an old friend and predecessor for a confidential chat. 'Hoppy' Hopkins remained firmly wedded to the Fisher-Wilson axis and was deeply unsympathetic to Bullock, although Hopkins was amenable to HMG issuing a statement which announced that Bullock's sentence had been expunged to lay the matter to rest for Bridges's sake.¹⁵³ Bridges attempted to draft a mutually acceptable statement, despite Bullock's petulant whinging. Ministers were equally graceless when they discovered Bridges's attempts to resolve the case and scuppered his efforts. Deflated and dejected, Bridges distanced himself from the case.¹⁵⁴ However, divisions between Permanent Secretaries over the Bullock affair did not reveal different standards of ethics. Instead, divisions reflected divergent interpretations of what Bullock had done and differing conceptions of magnitude.

Elite officials kept a watchful eye on criticism of the Civil Service in Parliament and the press.¹⁵⁵ As Head of the Civil Service, Fisher brought press campaigns to ministers' attention, railing against the contemptibility of ignorant accusations, including claims that civil servants had shirked fighting in the war and were idle, incompetent fraudsters.¹⁵⁶ Fisher urged ministers to condemn the press attacks, albeit

¹⁴⁹ CAC, HNKY/3/50, Hankey to Henry, 2 May 1948; TNA, T/273/161, Letter to Attlee, May 1948; Jowitt to Bridges, 12 June 1948; Attlee to Bullock, 28 July 1948.

¹⁵⁰ CUL, Templewood XIX/File 5, Bridges' notes, 29 September 1948.

¹⁵¹ TNA, T/273/161, Bullock to Bridges, 13 June 1947; Bridges to Attlee, 28 May 1948.

¹⁵² Richard Chapman, *Ethics in the British Civil Service* (London: Routledge, 1988), xix; 15.

¹⁵³ TNA, T/273/162, Meeting with Hopkins, 27 July 1949.

¹⁵⁴ TNA, T/273/162, Bridges to Barnes, 3 August 1950 and 31 December 1951.

¹⁵⁵ An early example is Hankey's reaction on 13 June 1922 in Keith Middlemas (ed.), *Thomas Jones, Whitehall Diary. Volume I: 1916-1925* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 202-203.

¹⁵⁶ TNA, T/172/1215, Fisher to Lloyd George and Chamberlain, 20 July 1921.

with little success. Vansittart was equally enraged when a Conservative politician attacked the Foreign Office in the Commons. Lamenting that ‘public servants, who cannot answer and are not answerable for Government decisions, should be exposed to abuse’, Vansittart drew Baldwin’s attention to ‘gratuitously offensive’ language which had criticised ‘defeatist half-wits from the Foreign Office’.¹⁵⁷ Other elite mandarins with lesser tempers shrugged off public ridicule of the Civil Service as an outlet for wider frustrations with ‘bureaucracy’.¹⁵⁸ Bridges (at this point a junior official) agreed with Russell Scott that ill-informed attacks were ‘best left to answer themselves. If the general public wishes to keep civil servants as a stock joke along with mothers-in-law, no amount of speeches will prevent them’.¹⁵⁹ Bridges continued to recognise that the Civil Service was ‘traditionally an object of fun’ and that comedy was ‘the Englishman’s reaction against authority’.¹⁶⁰ Nevertheless, while Head of the Civil Service, Bridges watched criticisms more carefully and frequently called on ministers to defend officials from attack.¹⁶¹ The good name of the Civil Service was at stake.

Principles in Practice: Attitudes to Reform

Cultures surrounding reform highlight strands of diversity within elite circles. While not all mandarins were traditionalists, none were truly revolutionary agents. A handful of the elite had been reformers before occupying a Permanent Secretary’s office. Crowe’s participation in the Foreign Office reforms at the turn of the century is perhaps the best example.¹⁶² Once firmly ensconced in the driving seat, a small number of Permanent Secretaries actively instigated reform. Lord Hardinge’s modernisation of the Foreign Office is a prime and well-studied example, while Bridges’s reorganisation of

¹⁵⁷ CUL, Baldwin 168/277, Vansittart to Baldwin, 15 March 1933.

¹⁵⁸ TNA, T/162/136, E18914, Russell Scott minute, 11 January 1928.

¹⁵⁹ TNA, T/162/136, E18914, Bridges’ minute, 6 January 1928.

¹⁶⁰ Edward Bridges, *Portrait of a Profession: The Civil Service Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 33.

¹⁶¹ Kevin Theakston, *Leadership in Whitehall* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 84-85.

¹⁶² Sibyl Crowe and Edward Corp, *Our Ablest Public Servant: Sir Eyre Crowe, 1864-1925* (Braunton: Merlin Books, 1993), 88-97; Zara Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 77-82.

the Cabinet Office to make it more efficient and to integrate it further into Whitehall, is another.¹⁶³ Alexander Maxwell was also a committed reformer at the Home Office.¹⁶⁴

Nevertheless, the most devoted reformer of the Georgian age was Fisher, a man of Liberal temperament. One of his most significant transformations came in 1928 when he installed regular civil servants in the Prime Minister's private office, having tactically sold the innovation to Baldwin as the premier's own idea to secure his support.¹⁶⁵ Another of Fisher's highly consequential innovations was the system whereby Permanent Secretaries became Accounting Officers for their departments.¹⁶⁶ This was designed to make Permanent Secretaries responsible for financial prudence, rather than the Treasury imposing heavy-handed restraint.¹⁶⁷ Permanent Secretaries thus became accountable to Parliament through the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the House of Commons.¹⁶⁸ Throughout the 1920s, Fisher and Russell Scott corralled reluctant Permanent Secretaries to accept the unpopular reform. Crowe emphatically refused to become a 'financial expert' answering to the PAC on the grounds that he was overworked and that his 'primary duty' was to assist the Foreign Secretary in policy questions.¹⁶⁹ Likewise, successive Permanent Under-Secretaries at the Foreign Office evaded the onerous charge until Fisher finally pinned the responsibilities on a reluctant Cadogan in 1938.¹⁷⁰ Cadogan resented the time-consuming duties: cramming before the 'grilling' and the 'offensive' way in which the 'reptiles' on the PAC tried to 'lay traps'.¹⁷¹ His successor, Orme Sargent, also attempted to buck the duties, but Bridges stood firm. Perfectly mimicking Fisher, albeit with a more conciliatory tone, Bridges reminded Sargent that Sargent was not the only busy Permanent Secretary, and that at a time of

¹⁶³ For details of reforms, see Gregory, *On the Edge of Diplomacy*, 255-256; Ephraim Maisel, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1919-1926* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1994), 7-11; Zara Steiner and M.L. Dockrill, 'The Foreign Office Reforms, 1919-21', *The Historical Journal*, 17:1 (1974), 131-156; Christina Lerner, 'The Amalgamation of the Diplomatic Service with the Foreign Office', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 7:1-2 (1972), 107-126; Theakston, *Leadership in Whitehall*, 83; TNA, T/268/21, Armstrong's appreciation of Bridges for *Public Administration* (1969).

¹⁶⁴ Norman George Price, 'The Relationship of the Home Office and the Ministry of Labour with the Treasury Establishment Division, 1919-1946: An Evaluation of Contrasting Needs' (unpublished PhD thesis, London School of Economics, 1991), 283-284.

¹⁶⁵ CUL, Baldwin 163/113, Fisher to Baldwin, 3 March 1928.

¹⁶⁶ O'Halpin, *Head of the Civil Service*, 51-55.

¹⁶⁷ TNA, T/169/18, Fisher's evidence, 17 December 1930; Edward Bridges, *Treasury Control* (London: The Athlone Press, 1950), 10-11.

¹⁶⁸ Strang, *Home and Abroad*, 269.

¹⁶⁹ TNA, T/220/479, Crowe to Fisher, 3 December 1920 and 13 January 1921.

¹⁷⁰ TNA, T/220/479, Fisher minute, 6 January 1938; Fisher to Cadogan, 13 January, 16 February and 18 February 1938.

¹⁷¹ CAC, ACAD/1/11, 26 February 1942; ACAD/1/12, 27 March 1943; ACAD/1/13, 28 March and 13 July 1944.

such large increases in the Foreign Office's expenditure, it was right for Sargent to take responsibility for the financial implications of foreign policy.¹⁷²

Those who conceived of the elite as fundamentally conservative and reactionary could point to a profusion of instances where Permanent Secretaries were apathetic to, or opposed, reform. Neither Anderson nor Russell Scott altered the machinery of the Home Office; Crowe's reforming days were behind him by the time he acceded to the Permanent Secretary's office; and neither Wilson nor Hopkins engaged in reforms at the Treasury. Cynics might posit that mandarins were contented with the status quo and fervently believed that the machinery of government was near perfection.¹⁷³ However, overworked Permanent Secretaries had little time to contemplate long-term administrative reform and they frequently dedicated themselves to more pressing work. Reform also required innovative minds and energy, yet lethargy and apathy were more common attitudes towards time-consuming administrative gambles. Very often, it was wider upheavals such as war which catalysed *ad hoc* adaptation and improvisation.¹⁷⁴ Orthodoxy was arguably valued to a greater extent than innovation within elite circles. There was not – as is often the case among historians – the tendency to necessarily conceive of reform through the Whiggish telescope of positive progress. Like many colleagues, Hankey's attitude to reform was determined on a case-by-case basis, judging each proposed innovation on its merits. As such, he could be perceived as both a reformer for having created the War Cabinet Secretariat in 1916, and 'utterly averse to all change' in his opposition to the creation of a Ministry of Defence.¹⁷⁵ In both instances, his personal ambitions coloured his support for, or opposition to, reform.

Schemes for reform at the Foreign Office reveal an aversion to institutional innovation. Vansittart was, from the beginning of his tenure, apathetic to reform, which he believed would create 'a good deal of friction and trouble without achieving any good'.¹⁷⁶ In their poor office management and apathy towards the machinery of government, Vansittart and Cadogan were alike.¹⁷⁷ By the interwar years, the Foreign Office drowned in paper. Vansittart castigated Heads of Department who inundated him with files rather than filtering important documents for his attention. He begged

¹⁷² TNA, FO/366/1754, Bridges to Sargent, 13 March 1946.

¹⁷³ Ponting, *Whitehall*, 89.

¹⁷⁴ John R. Greenaway, 'Warren Fisher and the Transformation of the British Treasury, 1919-1939', *Journal of British Studies*, 23:1 (1983), 125-142 (125).

¹⁷⁵ 22 May 1933 in Bond (ed.), *Pownall Diary. Volume I*, 16-17.

¹⁷⁶ TNA, FO/371/15672, W5483/866/50, Vansittart minute, April 1931.

¹⁷⁷ Rose, *Vansittart*, 72; Neilson and Otte, *Permanent Under-Secretary*, 262-264; David Dilks (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1938-1945* (London: Cassell, 1971), 19.

colleagues to 'shorten dispatches and telegrams' but took no further action to resolve institutional inefficiencies.¹⁷⁸ Similarly, Cadogan struggled under the weight of bureaucracy and passed most of the war under an avalanche of boxes, each crammed full of complicated files and long memoranda.¹⁷⁹ He railed against the verbosity of poorly-trained juniors and lackadaisical deputies who were failing to filter information flows.¹⁸⁰ Despite repeatedly promising himself to 'reorganise the F.O.', Cadogan was too overwhelmed to pursue reform; he also lacked the ability to devise reforms and was not interested in organisational matters.¹⁸¹ Schemes for the reform of the Foreign Office abounded during his tenure, yet Cadogan gave proposals limited blessing and contributed the bare minimum.¹⁸² Colleagues rightly perceived him to be opposed to 'any kind of reform' and criticised his disinterestedness in the 'rotten' administration.¹⁸³

To dwell briefly on elite mandarins' capabilities in managing their departments, there was great diversity in leadership. Bridges was a skilled leader, despite giving it 'little conscious effort'.¹⁸⁴ He won the respect and admiration of his departments and strengthened the morale of those with whom he worked during the dark days of war.¹⁸⁵ Bridges was a highly capable administrator and greatly concerned with the management of his department. However, it was arguably Crowe who achieved the most impressive oversight of his department, aided by the relatively small size of the Foreign Office in the immediate post-war period compared to later in the century.¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, it is wrong to necessarily equate approachability or affability with good leadership. Anderson was aloof and more interested in administration than staff management, although his style of leadership was successful, such as delegating work to develop his juniors' skills and confidence. Anderson also praised good work, while

¹⁷⁸ David Kelly, *The Ruling Few* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1952), 210; CAC, ACAD/1/2, 22 January 1934.

¹⁷⁹ See especially CAC, ACAD/1/10, 17 January 1941; ACAD/1/11, 22 May and 28 September 1942; ACAD/1/12, 15 April 1943; ACAD/1/13, 21 March 1944.

¹⁸⁰ CAC, ACAD/1/10, 5 September 1941; ACAD/1/13, 6 January, 14 April, 26 July and 27 July 1944.

¹⁸¹ CAC, ACAD/1/8, 6 October 1939; ACAD/1/12, 30 September 1943; ACAD/1/13, 27 July 1944

¹⁸² TNA, T/162/801, E45276/1, Cadogan to Fisher, 31 March 1938; Valerie Cromwell and Zara Steiner, 'Reform and Retrenchment: The Foreign Office between the Wars', in *The Foreign Office, 1782-1982* edited by Roger Bullen (Maryland: University Publications of America, 1984), 85-108; Lord Strang, *The Foreign Office* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1955), 68-70; F.T.A. Ashton-Gwatkin, 'Reform of the Foreign Service', *Public Administration*, 21:2 (1943), 82-84.

¹⁸³ 10 August and 28 November 1944 in Young (ed.), *Lockhart Diaries: Volume II*, 336-337; 371-372; TNA, T/162/801, E45276/3, Wilson to Wood, 18 May and 7 July 1942

¹⁸⁴ Winniffrith, 'Edward Ettingdean Bridges', 55-56.

¹⁸⁵ Theakston, *Leadership in Whitehall*, 73; Chapman, *Ethics*, 49-50; 66.

¹⁸⁶ Bodleian, MS. Eng. misc. c. 489, Dinner for Bridges, 6 December 1956; Strang, *Home and Abroad*, 271.

supporting those who made mistakes or asked for assistance.¹⁸⁷ In contrast, Hankey's subordinates offered a less flattering portrait of the Cabinet Secretary as office manager. He was described as a remote, controlling figure, desperate to keep juniors from his throne and therefore stretched thin 'turning his own chestnuts'.¹⁸⁸

Reform was not always divisive. Proposals for reform could be sites of complete consensus amongst the Whitehall elite. The admission of women to the very highest levels of the Civil Service on equal terms as men was opposed by all Permanent Secretaries throughout this period. The role of women in society underwent transformation in the first half of the twentieth century, from the suffrage movement to widespread employment in "men's jobs" during the wars. Women's behaviours changed, as did the framework of male-female relations.¹⁸⁹ Societal changes posed a "woman problem" for the anxious Whitehall elite who wished to preserve their male-dominated existence.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, their opposition was rooted in a problem with women. Private regard for individual women contrasted with scorn for women in public life and 'women' in the abstract. Befitting the mindsets of their period and class, both Hankey and Cadogan admired their wives as homemakers and mothers.¹⁹¹ Yet sexism and misogyny abounded. They stereotyped all women as gossipy troublemakers. Cadogan called his domestic staff 'sluts'. Hankey considered 'female predominance in politics' and the 'great danger' of equal franchise to be the root of interwar troubles.¹⁹² Fisher, who thought women the innately superior sex, was an exception to this culture. This was surprising given Fisher's turbulent marriage, and subsequent separation from a 'tiresome' and 'indecisive' wife.¹⁹³ He was also a ladies' man with a fondness for taking Treasury secretaries as his 'mistresses'; there was even a rumour, likely false, that Fisher attempted to trade honours for sexual favours.¹⁹⁴ Nevertheless, he was a 'feminist' for his time and pressed for women to be given greater opportunities. Fisher

¹⁸⁷ Bridges, 'Waverley', 322; Wheeler-Bennett, *Waverley*, 34; 84.

¹⁸⁸ CAC, ROSK/7/90, Nobby to Roskill, April 1973; 'Burgis on Hankey, 1967'; ROSK/7/94, Wells to Roskill, 4 June 1970; 2 February, 30 March, and 12 June 1933 and 14 January 1935 in Bond (ed.), *Pownall Diary. Volume I*, 11; 13-14; 19; 60.

¹⁸⁹ Heffer, *Age of Decadence*, chapter ten; Pugh, *We Danced All Night*, chapter one.

¹⁹⁰ Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain Between the Wars* (London: Allen Lane, 2009).

¹⁹¹ CAC, AHKY/4/6, Ursula Benn's notes; ACAD/7/1, Draft Autobiography; ACAD/3, correspondence with Theodosia.

¹⁹² CAC, ACAD/3/6, Cadogan to Theodosia, 5 February and 17 February 1933; ACAD/3/7, Cadogan to Theodosia, 1 May 1933; ACAD/1/22, 19 February 1951; HNKY/3/25, Hankey to Adeline, 5 December 1928; HNKY/3/36, Hankey to Adeline, 13 August 1929; AHKY/1/1/46, Hankey to Taffa, 29 October 1933.

¹⁹³ CAC, OHPN/2, Talks with Robin Fisher, 29 and 30 June.

¹⁹⁴ CAC, OHPN/1, Winnifrith to O'Halpin, 26 July 1980; Rumbold to O'Halpin, 5 January 1981; Playfair to O'Halpin, 17 February 1988; OHPN/2, Talk with Winnifrith, 4 December 1979.

denied that women existed 'solely to satisfy our stomachs and our lusts' and railed against 'half-hearted ... lip-service' to open the public sphere to women.¹⁹⁵

The 1919 Sex Disqualification (Removal) Bill empowered women to compete for vacancies in the higher grades of the Civil Service and significantly advanced the *principle* of equality. There was, however, a gap between *de jure* and *de facto* equality. Vacancies were scarce, promotion opportunities restricted, and grading scales ensured that unequal pay was institutionally sanctioned. Moreover, women's careers were greatly restricted by the marriage bar, which required women to resign when they married.¹⁹⁶ Regulations issued in 1921 also reserved certain posts for men.¹⁹⁷ The glass ceiling remained impenetrable during the interwar years. Between 1919 and 1938, women's representation in the Civil Service rose only 2% to 26%, with the vast majority employed in the lowest grades.¹⁹⁸ This was in no small part because of the activities of the Whitehall elite. As the new world was foisted upon them, mandarins responded by laying down obstacles to obstruct, or shape, change.

In 1929, Lord Tomlin's Royal Commission on the Civil Service investigated women's status and employment. The Commission heard evidence from several Permanent Secretaries, who seized the opportunity to obstruct potential reforms.¹⁹⁹ Anderson professed to welcome women into the higher classes at the Home Office – rather than just as inspectors and clerks – while undermining the efficiency and quality of women's work to the Commission. Russell Scott also claimed to support advancement for women, although he confessed to feeling that women's strengths best suited them to subordinate positions. Horace Wilson cast similar aspersions and, like his colleagues, supported unequal pay structures on the grounds that men had familial responsibilities, and that men and women had different economic worth. Appearing before the Commission, the Foreign Office's Chief Clerk, Hubert Montgomery, blamed other nations for the situation whereby women did not serve abroad.²⁰⁰ Montgomery urged the Commission to recognise that in supposedly less progressive countries, female

¹⁹⁵ Fisher Papers, Draft Memoirs, 'The Contribution of Woman'.

¹⁹⁶ Hilda Martindale, *Women Servants of the State, 1870-1938: A History of Women in the Civil Service* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1938), 81-99; Helen McCarthy, 'Petticoat Diplomacy: The Admission of Women to the British Foreign Service, c. 1919-1946', *Twentieth Century British History* 20:3 (2009), 285-321 (286-291).

¹⁹⁷ TNA, FO/366/795, Copy of Regulations, 23 August 1921

¹⁹⁸ Meta Zimmeck, 'Strategies and Stratagems for the Employment of Women in the British Civil Service, 1919-1939', *The Historical Journal*, 27:4 (1984), 901-924 (913).

¹⁹⁹ TNA, T/169/16, Anderson's evidence, 9 December 1929; Russell Scott's evidence, 13 November 1929; T/169/17, Wilson's evidence, 4 December 1930.

²⁰⁰ TNA, T/169/17, Montgomery's evidence, 1 July and 2 July 1930

diplomats would be scorned and unable to fulfil the social aspects of the role, including transacting business in male-only spaces. Montgomery refused to countenance reserving diplomatic posts in progressive countries for women and instead recommended the practice whereby women served their country by supporting their diplomat husbands.²⁰¹ Samuel Wilson (Permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office) and Edward Harding (of the Dominions Office) agreed that women serving abroad would be a liability.²⁰² In contrast, Fisher's testimony was more measured.²⁰³ Fisher cautioned the Commission that the Civil Service must not march 'too fast ahead of the general public'. He supported the marriage bar to avoid high male unemployment and defended unequal pay on the grounds that after being treated as 'housewives and toys', women were less efficient. Yet most strikingly, Fisher argued that female diplomats should be allowed to serve in countries where they would be treated with 'civility and courtesy' and urged the Commission to be 'pioneers'. He particularly scorned the sexism and exceptionalism underpinning his colleagues' attitudes and criticised that women might one day be allowed to serve abroad 'provided there aren't too many natives around addicted to rape, to prove ... to a foreign country what open-minded creatures the men of England are'.²⁰⁴ The Tomlin Report was ultimately a success for obstructionists: it recommended the retention of the marriage bar and the reservation of particular posts for men.²⁰⁵

The Foreign Office revisited the question of women serving abroad in the 1930s and 1940s; each time, Permanent Secretaries undermined proposals to further women's positions. In 1933, Vansittart schemed with the Principal Establishment Officer, Howard Smith.²⁰⁶ Smith canvassed ambassadors' views for 'ammunition' in the fight against female diplomats. Ronald Lindsay denied that a female diplomat could succeed, even in the 'civilised' USA, while William Tyrrell agreed that women could not partake in official life in France and would upset the 'emotional balance' of his chancery.²⁰⁷ William Strang was alone in advising that a woman might serve in Moscow, although he, too, admitted that her presence would strain the personal dynamics in an embassy.²⁰⁸ As Helen

²⁰¹ Katie Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia: The Lives and Times of Diplomatic Wives* (London: Flamingo, 2000).

²⁰² TNA, T/162/284, Committee minutes, 31 July 1931 and 26 January 1932.

²⁰³ TNA, T/169/18, Fisher's evidence, 17 December 1930.

²⁰⁴ Fisher Papers, Draft Memoirs, 'The Contribution of Woman'.

²⁰⁵ TNA, T/162/284, E26475/05, Synopsis.

²⁰⁶ Helen McCarthy, *Women of the World: The Rise of the Female Diplomat* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 115-118.

²⁰⁷ TNA, FO/366/916, X7848/278/504, Lindsay to Smith, 22 November 1933; FO/366/915, X6587/278/504, Tyrrell to Smith, 11 October 1933.

²⁰⁸ TNA, FO/366/916, X6935/278/504, Strang to Smith, 27 October 1933.

McCarthy's work has demonstrated, practical excuses concealed inflexible conceptions of gender roles and resistance to reform.²⁰⁹ Vansittart also worked to spike the membership of the Schuster Committee, which had been convened to consider the role of women in the Foreign Office, and to 'weight the evidence against the women' because 'unless ... women must have all the good posts, the thing is impossible'.²¹⁰ Addressing the Schuster Committee, Vansittart stressed that the proposal had no merits and laid down objections. He ranged from women's work being inferior to men's to how intolerable it would be for a man to be dragged around the world by his diplomat wife. Above all, Vansittart pointed the finger at 'the foreigner. He is not ready for the experiment'.²¹¹ Vansittart was successful, for when the Schuster Committee reported in 1936, it concluded that posts should be reserved for men.

There was pressure to expand opportunities for women in the Foreign Office during the war. Cadogan supported the expansion of women's employment in temporary posts to meet labour shortages, although he worried that rolling back any advances post-war would be difficult.²¹² Then, the Gowers Committee formally investigated reserved posts in 1945. 'Hard-boiled and old-fashioned', Cadogan hoped that it would rule against *de facto* equality.²¹³ His evidence before the Gowers Committee demonstrated his 'determined opposition'.²¹⁴ Refusing to offer special treatment to women by offering them the best posts, Cadogan also painted women as 'prima donnas' who should be barred from admission.²¹⁵ The Committee rejected his prejudiced views and, as a result of its recommendations, women were allowed to serve in all posts. However, a 10% cap on female entrants and the retention of the marriage bar ensured that the feminisation of the Foreign Service would be heavily restricted and gradual.²¹⁶ Slow progress had been driven by transformations brought about by war and the support of a handful of influential figures – none of whom were Permanent Secretaries.

²⁰⁹ McCarthy, 'Petticoat Diplomacy', 287; 300-301.

²¹⁰ TNA, FO/366/917, X8216/278/504, Vansittart minute, 15 December 1933.

²¹¹ TNA, FO/366/929, M08, Vansittart's Memorandum, 30 January 1934.

²¹² TNA, FO/366/1277, C454/329/504, Cadogan's minute, 24 November 1941.

²¹³ TNA, FO/366/1499, CP8051/103/907, Cadogan's minute, 10 August 1945.

²¹⁴ CAC, STRN/2/1, 'Women in the Foreign Service', 1962; Rundall to Strang, 10 October 1962.

²¹⁵ TNA, FO/366/1521, XP12234/9531/907, Cadogan's evidence, 23 November 1945.

²¹⁶ FCO Historians, 'Women and the Foreign Office: A History', *History Notes*, 20 (2018).

Principles in Practice: An Apolitical Civil Service

One of the most hallowed principles was that the Civil Service must be apolitical. Mandarins were not to partake in party-political activities. As John Anderson insisted, a civil servant 'has nothing to do with politics ... He is entitled as an individual to his own political views. He has a vote and can use it. But he is not entitled to make a parade of any particular political faith'.²¹⁷ Vansittart and Hankey took pride in refraining from voting throughout their lives, except on one occasion.²¹⁸ Although it was suspected, quite accurately, that elite officials were largely Conservative party supporters, the apolitical character of the Civil Service was the foundation of the impartiality with which officials were to serve governments of all party colours.²¹⁹ Allegiance was to the Crown, not to the government of the day. Mandarins, and particularly the elite who worked most closely with politicians, thus had to balance loyalty with the knowledge that ministers and premiers did not rule forever. The essential skill was to 'be able to change one's colours like a chameleon'.²²⁰ Asked by the incoming Home Secretary whether Anderson was 'glad' to see his new minister in office, Anderson drily replied: 'I have been brought up in a profession which has taught me that it is wrong to give expression to emotions either of pleasure or sorrow on occasions such as this'.²²¹ Certainly, the arrival of the first Labour government in 1924 provoked concern in some quarters. For example, chapter three demonstrates how those in defence circles, including Hankey, feared that a Labour government might imperil Britain's defences. However, it is not true that senior officials conspired to remove the Labour government. A good example is the infamous case of the Zinoviev letter.²²² Although some interpretations posit that Crowe had been involved in a mendacious plot to oust Ramsay MacDonald's minority government, Gill Bennett's forensic examination of the case demonstrates that Crowe was 'scrupulous in his loyalty to his Minister' and that his actions were genuine mistakes caused by being overworked and ill rather than a desire to embarrass and topple MacDonald's government.²²³

²¹⁷ Quoted in Wheeler-Bennett, *Waverley*, 167.

²¹⁸ CAC, HNKY/3/38, Hankey to sons, 31 May 1931; Vansittart, *Mist Procession*, 400-401.

²¹⁹ Chapman, *Ethics*, 102-107.

²²⁰ National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh [hereafter NLS], Haldane MS. 5916, Hankey to Haldane, 10 November 1924.

²²¹ Quoted in Wheeler-Bennett, *Waverley*, 88-89.

²²² Which purported to be a directive from Moscow to Britain's Communist Party to launch seditious activity and which created a storm within government and the press. For an excellent and up-to-date overview of the case, see Gill Bennett, *The Zinoviev Letter: The Conspiracy That Never Dies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

²²³ Bennett, *The Zinoviev Letter*, 67.

The concept of an apolitical Civil Service has sometimes been misunderstood as equating to 'neutrality' or 'impartiality' in policy questions. Mandarins could, and did, support particular policy options, and they could press their policy advice on ministers.²²⁴ This advice was often underpinned by a mandarin's conception of the 'national interest' – a vague notion influenced by social, political, and economic assumptions. Partiality in policy questions was problematic when a civil servant became publicly associated with a specific expression of the national interest, including the case of Horace Wilson and appeasement.²²⁵ It could also become problematic when elite officials were willing to pursue any means by which to realise their preferred policies, from threatening to resign, to working subversively against a minister's wishes.²²⁶

Integral to the apolitical nature of the Civil Service was the dictum that mandarins were not to involve themselves in ministers' political lives: their preoccupation should be policy, not politics.²²⁷ Nevertheless, elite mandarins occupied front-row seats from which to watch – half-amused, half-despairing – events unfolding in Westminster. High politics necessarily impacted on the Whitehall elite, albeit on some more than others. They absorbed political gossip, political questions necessarily infringed on decision-making, and Permanent Secretaries were sometimes called upon to offer informal counsel on Cabinet-making or political appointments.²²⁸ Fisher, for example, was keenly interested in the political fortunes of his favourite minister, encouraging Neville Chamberlain to assert himself in the party hierarchy and celebrating his triumphs.²²⁹ Furthermore, a minority of mandarins were politically minded. The majority were like Cadogan, who possessed a poor grasp of parliamentary procedure and a failing anemometer for gauging changing political winds.²³⁰ In contrast, one of Wilson's greatest strengths was his political antennae.²³¹ The Whitehall elite disdained the vanity, dishonesty, and self-interest of those who blackened their hands

²²⁴ TNA, T/169/18, Fisher's evidence, 17 December 1930.

²²⁵ Chapman, *Ethics*, 64.

²²⁶ For an example of the threat to resign over policy, see 21 November 1927 in Keith Middlemas (ed.), *Thomas Jones, Whitehall Diary. Volume II: 1926-1930* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 116-117.

²²⁷ Bridges, *Portrait of a Profession*, 27-28.

²²⁸ CAC, HOBE/1/5, 26-29 January 1939.

²²⁹ CRL, NC/2/21, 13 January 1924; NC/7/11/23/5, Fisher to Chamberlain, 24 June 1930.

²³⁰ CAC, ACAD/1/9, 8 May and 9 May 1940; ACAD/1/15, 28 February 1945.

²³¹ Robert Self, *Neville Chamberlain: A Biography* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 292; Hennessy, *Whitehall*, 147-148.

in the 'dirty' trade of politics.²³² However, these reservations did not prevent officials and ministers from developing warm personal and professional relations.

Excepting private secretaries, Permanent Secretaries were in the company of their ministers more than any other officials. Such proximity and access afforded the space for close relations to develop. Beyond the office, social occasions helped to cement bonds, such as lunches and dinners, and games of golf and tennis.²³³ Ministers were cultivated as confidants, patrons, and allies. This was a two-way process in which ministers also recognised the value of being on excellent terms with officials to harness their skills and capabilities. Nonetheless, much of the drive came from mandarins. Hankey advised his son to 'remember that your future ... will depend a good deal on the reports ... by your boss. You must play up to him ... humour him, even if he gets tiresome ... Never show irritation ... anticipate his wishes; study his habits ... find out what cigarettes [he] smokes ... keep some handy'.²³⁴ Flattery was a particularly common tool. Extending beyond polite, professional courtesy or defence to authority, officials lavished praise upon ministers for their generosity, courage, and decisiveness.²³⁵ Tyrrell was a particularly saccharine correspondent; he praised the 'pluck, perseverance and resourcefulness' and the 'superhuman efforts' of his 'dear Chief', Austen Chamberlain.²³⁶ In a similar vein, Tyrrell addressed Baldwin as his 'beloved PM'.²³⁷ Hankey also gained a reputation for 'sucking up' and being 'extravagantly loyal to his immediate chief'.²³⁸ Politicians' diaries and correspondence reveal the extent to which ministers often succumbed to praise from mandarins who they respected as competent and experienced professionals.²³⁹ This is not to deny that elite officials did frequently hold ministers in genuine affection and admiration. *Private* praise of ministers is arguably the best barometer of such sentiments. Hankey's most 'treasured' associations were

²³² CAC, ACAD/1/9, 9 May 1940; ACAD/1/15, 1 March 1945; 18 October 1937 in Stuart (ed.), *Reith Diaries*, 216-217.

²³³ See CRL, AP/14/1/130, Vansittart to Eden, 1 October 1932; TNA, PRO/30/69/753, Vansittart to MacDonald, 29 December 1930 and 26 August 1931; CAC, HNKY/1/7, 11 October 1924 and 3 October 1932; HNKY/4/26, Ishbel to Adeline, 7 February 1934.

²³⁴ CAC, AHKY/1/1/45, Hankey to Taffa, 23 September 1933.

²³⁵ For a selection, see, CRL, AC/23/10/5, Fisher to Chamberlain 2 January 1920; AP/8/2/33, Cadogan to Eden, 22 February 1938; NC/7/11/25/9, Fisher to Chamberlain, 27 May 1932; CUL, Baldwin 234/121, Vansittart to Baldwin, undated.

²³⁶ CRL, AC/53/554, Tyrrell to Chamberlain, 15 March 1926.

²³⁷ CUL, Baldwin 162/172-173, Tyrrell to Baldwin, 26 May 1927.

²³⁸ 13 November 1939 in Colville, *Fringes of Power*, 51; 4 December 1916 in Trevor Wilson (ed.), *The Political Diaries of C.P. Scott, 1911-1928* (London: Collins, 1970), 245.

²³⁹ Neville Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 17 October 1926 and Neville Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 16 March 1935 in Robert Self (ed.), *The Austen Chamberlain Diary Letters, 1916-1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 293-294; 478; Neville Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 3 August 1932 in Robert Self (ed.), *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters. Volume 3: The Heir Apparent, 1928-1933* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 338-340.

with Lloyd George and MacDonald, while he was not close to Baldwin, who he thought lazy.²⁴⁰ Fisher was closest to Chamberlain and Baldwin, while he sneered at Churchill.²⁴¹ Chamberlain also earned the genuine affection of Cadogan, who even admitted that it might be 'impertinent or improper' to confide the depth of his 'admiration' and 'loyal devotion' to Chamberlain.²⁴² Chamberlain did not inspire such feelings in Vansittart, and nor did John Simon or Anthony Eden; instead, Vansittart admired MacDonald and Baldwin above all other politicians.²⁴³ Ministers were often drawn to specific officials and began to consider these individuals to be friends and companions rather than professional acquaintances.²⁴⁴ There was usually a personal dimension, such as a meeting of minds or personalities, and this was undoubtedly a factor in the Cadogan-Halifax and Wilson-Chamberlain partnerships.²⁴⁵

The Civil Service was apolitical. This was distinct from questions of 'neutrality', 'impartiality', or even relations with ministers. While relations were dynamic and could be fractious at times, as revealed in subsequent chapters, mandarins expended considerable energies in cultivating and maintaining good relations with ministers.²⁴⁶ Good personal and professional relations can be explained by reference to four primary factors. The bonds of relationships were often assisted by the culture of respect and social deference towards ministers, as well as the experience of ministers and their senior officials working closely together during trying times. Thirdly, both mandarins and ministers understood the importance of network building to realise policy goals and personal ambitions. Finally, close relationships were facilitated by the undeniable truth

²⁴⁰ TNA, PRO/30/69/758, Hankey to MacDonald, 14 April 1936; PRO/30/69/1446, Hankey to MacDonald, 26 December 1936; CAC, AHKY/1/1/33, Hankey to Ursula, 3 February 1924; HNKY/1/7, 11 November 1923 and 9 December 1923; HNKY/3/32, Hankey to Adeline, 2 August 1924; HNKY/3/36, Hankey to Robin, 3 July 1929; Keith Middlemas and John Barnes, *Baldwin: A Biography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 318; Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets. Volume I, 1877-1918* (London: Collins, 1970), 393-394; 514; *Roskill, Hankey: Volume II*, 334-344; 388.

²⁴¹ TNA, PRO/30/69/759, Fisher to MacDonald, 8 June and 3 August 1937; CRL, NC/7/11/17/7, Fisher to Chamberlain, 4 June 1924; NC/13/18/839, Fisher to Chamberlain, 8 October 1940; David Dilks, *Neville Chamberlain. Volume I: Pioneering and Reform, 1869-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 364; 540-541; Self, *Chamberlain*, 194-5; 206-7; Middlemas and Barnes, *Baldwin*, 76; 177; 485-6.

²⁴² CRL, NC/7/11/32/35, Cadogan to Chamberlain, 31 December 1939; NC/13/18/804, Cadogan to Chamberlain, 12 October 1940.

²⁴³ Vansittart, *Mist Procession*; Rose, *Vansittart*, 66; 81-82; 109; Neilson and Otte, *Permanent Under-Secretary*, 231-232; TNA, PRO/30/69/1767, Vansittart to MacDonald 8 October (no year).

²⁴⁴ For example, CAC, VNST/II/1/5, Hoare to Vansittart, 8 May (no year); Baldwin to Vansittart, 8 June 1937; MacDonald to Vansittart, 1 June 1937; ACAD/4/2, Eden to Cadogan, 4 August 1945.

²⁴⁵ Addison Papers, Interview with Wilson, 4 April 1967; Rodney Lowe and Richard Roberts, 'Sir Horace Wilson, 1900-1935: The Making of a Mandarin', *The Historical Journal*, 30:3 (1987), 641-662 (647-648).

²⁴⁶ Dale, *Higher Civil Service*, 127-128.

that like elite officials, most ministers had either been drawn from the privileged classes, or else assimilated to such behaviours and mindsets. They thus shared a cultural and social framework of understanding.²⁴⁷

Conclusion

This chapter has explored both the nature and character of the room at the top, and subsequently, the view from that room. Elite mandarins were not, despite resilient stereotypes, identical automatons. There was tension – at times, acute tension – between institutionalisation, social norms, and individuality. The result was often diversity constrained within narrow, conservative limits. This is to be expected because, after ‘similarly accultured young men’ spent decades rising in parallel through the institution’s hierarchy, ‘their habits, modes of thought, patterns of speech, style of drafting will have rubbed off one to the other’.²⁴⁸ Each elite official conformed to a considerable degree to a group identity which was anchored in a male-dominated, white, middle-class, or upper-middle-class existence. Shared traits and cultures cemented group bonds and cultivated the identity of an ‘insider’. However, each elite mandarin was unique – an outlier in some respect – and thus simultaneously an ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ in the kaleidoscope of identities. It was not that a handful of individuals were ‘outsiders’, but instead that all individuals possessed a handful of ‘outsider’ qualities.

Far from conceiving of the Civil Service as a bland, mechanical ‘abstraction’, meaningful examination of the Civil Service must be founded on the human dimension through a study of individuals, their environment, and their relations.²⁴⁹ Personalities, cultures, and environments mattered, not least because they contributed to the tone of the Civil Service by creating a ‘consciousness of the collective’, including common assumptions and codes of behaviour.²⁵⁰ The actions of elite mandarins shaped the Civil Service. Dominant cultures imbued the central state with a strong moral rectitude and the expectation of good, ethical conduct which may seem alien to a de-sensitised, twenty-first century audience. Dominant cultures also strongly influenced attitudes to

²⁴⁷ Joyce, *State of Freedom*, 224.

²⁴⁸ Hennessy, *Whitehall*, 521-522.

²⁴⁹ Dale, *Higher Civil Service*, 142.

²⁵⁰ Joyce, *State of Freedom*, 218-219.

reform. Orthodox, reactionary mindsets were more widespread than liberal progressivism. Most elites resisted change, both in institutional innovation and in adapting to societal transformations. While they believed themselves to be strengthening the Civil Service by preserving tradition, critics claimed that they were contributing to a dangerous state of sclerosis.²⁵¹ Finally, perhaps one of the most intriguing dimensions of mindsets concerns the question of 'neutral' and 'apolitical' conduct. Mandarins often steered clear of strong party loyalties and were rarely engaged in politics, except in how it impinged on their spheres of activity. As demonstrated in subsequent chapters, the elite were ultimately far less interested in assisting in the pursuit of ministers' goals than in using politicians to further mandarins' own policy interests.

²⁵¹ Joyce, *State of Freedom*, 228.

Chapter Three: Policy Networks and Obstructive Influence

If Lilliputians can tie up Gulliver, or make him do their fighting for them, they must be studied as carefully as the giant.¹

This chapter centres on the influence of the Whitehall elite in policymaking. Specifically, it explores attempts to obstruct policy change. In this way, it illuminates both the nature and extent of obstructive power, a phenomenon distinct from constructive power. Obstructing change and defending the status quo were a very different – and arguably easier – task than persuading the government to leap into the unknown. This chapter demonstrates the range of tactics deployed to this end, including the control of information, manipulating the ‘rules of the game’, and the construction of a broad-based network, to shine a light on officials’ toolkits.

The Channel Tunnel project is used as an investigative lens. The proposal that the British government should support the construction of a railway tunnel beneath the Channel seabed was thrice the subject of sustained investigation during the interwar period. On each occasion, it was fiercely resisted by a powerful network of ministers and mandarins, with Maurice Hankey (the Cabinet Secretary) acting as the lynchpin of opposition. A particularly intriguing characteristic of the network of resistance which coalesced around the Channel Tunnel proposal was its obsolescence between inquiries. It was regenerated and reconfigured with each inquiry – and even during inquiries – as elections returned a new party to office, ministers were reshuffled between departments, and officials were promoted or retired.

Networks can stretch vertically, horizontally, and diagonally. Identifying connections beyond rigid departmental frontiers and hierarchies offers a more three-dimensional and representative understanding of decision-making. The network assembled to resist the Channel Tunnel project permeated far beyond the boundaries of a single institution; it stretched across Whitehall and into ministerial, scientific, military,

¹ Robert O. Keohane, ‘Lilliputians’ Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics’, *International Organisation*, 23:2 (1969), 291-310 (310).

parliamentary, journalistic, and economic spheres. Whilst highlighting the crucial role played by one individual, the chapter underscores the significance of studying officials within the wider community, rather than as isolated actors. The emphasis thus shifts between the individual and the collective. It reveals both the ways in which a network was constructed and how those affixed to the network harnessed their combined capital to mount collective and sustained resistance to the tunnel project. Indeed, the construction of a network was a deliberate tactic to mitigate against the limitations of the individual's agency. Power is both relative and asymmetrical. Ministers were more powerful than Permanent Secretaries and from this recognition of relative weakness stemmed the realisation that alliances might amplify an individual's influence.² The chapter therefore explores notions of collective and derivative influence.

Evidence from the 1919-1920, 1924, and 1929-1930 inquiries is examined in turn to provide insight into the influence and methods of elite officials. First, however, it is pertinent to consider the justifications which Hankey offered for his opposition.³ He feared that the Channel Tunnel would adversely affect defences. Following the experience of blockade during the Great War, proponents argued that the tunnel would provide a secure supply line. Hankey asserted that Britain would become dependent on such a supply line and that this dependence could easily be exploited in times of war to isolate Britain. Furthermore, the Cabinet Secretary fervently believed that Britain would be more vulnerable to attack. The Kentish coast would become the soft underbelly of Great Britain; the tunnel could be used in a 'bolt from the blue' attack to transport an invading army to Britain's shores, facilitated by developments in transport and air power. A foreign power could thus evade the Royal Navy's maritime supremacy and the risks of an ambitious cross-Channel amphibious invasion. Moreover, at a time of overwhelming defence commitments across the Empire, a permanent force would have to be stationed at the tunnel exit to safeguard it. Hankey stressed that despite complex safeguards to secure the tunnel, it would be impossible to protect against every contingency; plans for the British to flood, blow up, or obstruct the tunnel in times of rising tension or war might be liable to sabotage, mechanical failure, or human error. Indeed, Hankey warned of the inherent contradiction in schemes for a cross-Channel link: the tunnel must be 'indestructible when you want to use it and destructible when you do not want somebody else to use it'.

² Keohane, 'Lilliputians' Dilemmas', 296.

³ The following is largely based on: TNA, CAB/63/25/37-40, 'Note by Sir Maurice Hankey', 10 November 1919; CAB/63/25/50-51, 'Memorandum by Sir Maurice Hankey', 17 December 1919; CAB/58/122, Evidence to the Channel Tunnel Sub-Committee, 13 November 1929; CAB/3/5/174A, 'Some Imperial Defence Aspects', Hankey, 22 May 1930.

Nevertheless, Hankey's political and psychological motivations were arguably more significant and revealing. These were five-faceted. The first was lack of proportion. The indisputable truth that constructing the tunnel was the unattainable dream of engineers and financiers should have moderated his anxiety; even when the project was finally completed in 1994, it was both the most expensive and one of the most miraculous feats of engineering in human history.⁴ The second was a nostalgic, almost reactionary fixation on the sea at a time when air power was revolutionising civil and military society and rendering traditional defences obsolete.⁵ This was perhaps unsurprising given Hankey's early naval career. The third was morbid fear that a crisis of the greatest magnitude would erupt should the tunnel be constructed.⁶ The fourth facet of Hankey's opposition centred on his deep suspicion of continental politics and stability, especially in France. This was unsurprising given the coincidence of his formative years at the turn of the century with a period when war with France appeared imminent. Hankey perceived that any benefits which the tunnel might render would evaporate if relations with France soured, or if France was overrun by a foreign power. Moreover, he contended that the existence of the tunnel would bind British 'policy more closely with the Continent' and provide the French with a 'tender spot ... which they could threaten in order to get their way'; he thus feared the spectre of British diplomacy transformed into the handmaiden of France. Hankey ultimately conceived of an enduring adversarial relationship between Britain and France. Finally, the fifth facet was intrinsically linked to a sense of insularity. The Cabinet Secretary favoured estrangement between Britain and its neighbours. He subscribed to the view that island identity was the foundation of a unique British character, by affording Britons freedom from fears of invasion and distance from oppressive Continental institutions and ideologies.⁷ Hankey worried that to forfeit this insularity would rob Britons of their 'consciousness of security', generate a crisis of confidence, and undermine the British national character.

Historians have long been interested in the Channel Tunnel and this research does not seek to retell the convoluted story of the project, which was laid bare in Keith

⁴ It is still consistently ranked as one of the seven engineering wonders of the modern world.

⁵ Martin Pugh, *We Danced All Night: A Social History of Britain Between the Wars* (London: Vintage, 2009).

⁶ Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain Between the Wars* (London: Allen Lane, 2009).

⁷ Duncan Redford, 'Opposition to the Channel Tunnel, 1882-1975: Identity, Island Status and Security', *History*, 99:334 (2014), 100-120 (106-111).

Wilson's work on the subject.⁸ Other scholars have illuminated specific aspects of the project in greater depth.⁹ However, the historiography falls short in evaluating the actual influence of officials. Keith Wilson concluded that Hankey 'played a role which still remains to be evaluated'.¹⁰ Similarly, Hankey's biographer, Stephen Roskill, struggled to articulate his influence, 'because he always used the method of indirect approach to achieve his ends'.¹¹ Discussions of power and influence are often cocooned in perception and supposition rather than evidence.¹² Roskill nonetheless subscribed to the notion of Hankey as an 'eminence grise', echoing Aldous Huxley's study of Cardinal Richelieu's confidant – François le Clerc du Tremblay.¹³ Unsurprisingly, so too did Hankey, who enjoyed boasting of his influence in such hyperbolic terms as to claim that ministers 'always adopted my advice and did what I wanted'.¹⁴ Such assertions account in part for the willingness of historians to paint him as an omnipotent mandarin. Contemporaries' assumptions of Hankey's influence have also distorted interpretations. Lawrence Burgis, Hankey's private secretary for two decades, asserted that Hankey was 'a man whose advice, over a period of twenty-five years, no Prime Minister or Service Chief could afford to disregard in matters of Defence'.¹⁵ Edward Bridges – never an admirer of Hankey – believed that his predecessor as Cabinet Secretary was 'remarkable' at 'getting his own way', although Bridges worried that such a statement would suggest that Hankey acted unconstitutionally in using his 'position to foist his own views on Ministers', and so he amended his statement to read that Hankey 'showed extraordinary skill and adroitness in getting a proposal adopted and pushed through'.¹⁶

The exceptional nature of the Channel Tunnel case study makes it a particularly rewarding one through which to study the networks and influence of the Whitehall elite. An unusually rich body of source material allows historians to reconstruct the decision-making process and trace machinations behind the scenes. This is vital as the study of

⁸ Keith Wilson, *Channel Tunnel Visions, 1850-1945: Dreams and Nightmares* (London: Hambledon Press, 1994).

⁹ For example, Terry Gourvish, *The Official History of Britain and the Channel Tunnel* (London: Routledge, 2006); Richard S. Grayson, 'The British Government and the Channel Tunnel, 1919-39', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 31:1 (1996), 125-144.

¹⁰ Wilson, *Channel Tunnel Visions*, 121.

¹¹ Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets. Volume II, 1919-1931* (London: Collins, 1972), 363.

¹² The classic example remains Cato's attacks on Horace Wilson in *Guilty Men* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1940), 86-90.

¹³ Aldous Huxley, *Grey Eminence: A Study in Religion and Politics* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1941).

¹⁴ CAC, HNKY/1/7, 22 March 1925.

¹⁵ CAC, BRGS/1/1, Memoir, f. 23.

¹⁶ CAC, ROSK/7/90, Bridges to Roskill, 9 December 1968

power is the study of minutiae; *causes* must be distinguished from mere *associations*.¹⁷ Moreover, the value of this case study lies in appreciating Hankey's life-long obsession with the project.¹⁸ While he took a keen interest in all aspects of defence policy, no other issue animated him to the same extent as the tunnel proposal.¹⁹ Examining his activities in connection with the project therefore affords the opportunity to demonstrate the maximum limit of his capabilities.

The Inquiry of 1919-1920

The first schemes for a Channel Tunnel dated from the early 1800s, yet successive British governments rejected proposals on defence grounds, most notably in 1906 and 1913. Invigorated by the experiences of war, proponents advocated for a new inquiry in the early months of 1919. The project was supported by the French government, as well as the Channel Tunnel Company, yet the strongest agitation emanated from the House of Commons Channel Tunnel Committee, led by Arthur Fell, which claimed to command the support of the public and over 350 MPs.²⁰ Proponents were encouraged by the Prime Minister's support; David Lloyd George raised the prospect of a tunnel during the Paris Peace Conference as part of the abortive Anglo-American guarantee to France.²¹ Then, in November 1919, Lloyd George suddenly placed the issue on the Cabinet agenda to canvass ministerial opinion.²²

In advance of the Cabinet meeting, Hankey circulated a document which traced the history of previous proposals. It was the Cabinet Secretary's duty to bring such records to the attention of decision-makers and only senior officials possessed 'the right of continuous access to the most secret state papers from administration to

¹⁷ Robert Dahl, 'The Concept of Power', *Behavioural Science*, 2:3 (1957), 201-215 (203); Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 2.

¹⁸ See TNA, CAB/21/1190 for Hankey's obsession with Channel Tunnel fears during the Second World War.

¹⁹ Thomas Jones, *A Diary with Letters, 1931-1950* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), xviii; Roskill, *Hankey: Volume II*, 131-134.

²⁰ TNA, T/1/12311, Curzon to Derby, 9 April 1919; FO/371/3765/189320, Telegram from Derby, 29 March 1920.

²¹ Imperial War Museum, London [hereafter IWM], HHW/1/34/104-106, 23 March 1919; Keith Wilson, 'Missing Link: The Channel Tunnel and the Anglo-American Guarantee to France, March 1919', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 5:1 (1994), 73-80 (74-77).

²² TNA, CAB/23/18/2, 5 Nov 1919.

administration'.²³ Yet Hankey strained his constitutional bonds in weighing the advantages and disadvantages – and emphasising the latter.²⁴ Simultaneously, Hankey sent Lloyd George and Arthur Balfour (Lord President of the Council) a more damning and forceful memorandum, warning that the tunnel would be 'a danger for all time'.²⁵ These were the first steps in a comprehensive effort to control the flow of information. However, when Lloyd George canvassed the Cabinet's opinion on 11 November, there was almost unanimous support for the project. Balfour alone objected on defence grounds.²⁶ When drafting the meeting's conclusions, Hankey embellished that the 'general trend of opinion ... was in favour of not opposing ... construction', provided that military authorities deemed it safe.²⁷ This suggested 'negative acquiescence' rather than 'positive enthusiasm'.²⁸ Hankey marvelled to his diary at 'what power lies in the draughtsman's hands!'²⁹ This egotistical assertion deserves attention for it reveals the ways in which historiographical understandings of Hankey and the Cabinet Secretary's role have been mis-shaped.

Prior to the archives opening, the recollections of contemporaries moulded interpretations of Hankey. Frederick Leith-Ross recalled how ministers trickling from the Cabinet room were unable to articulate what had been decided and so informed their secretaries 'to wait for Hankey's minute'. He described how Hankey 'was able to ... elaborate a conclusion which often had not been expressed in so many words by anyone at the meeting ... I thought of him as an inspired sausage-maker: it did not matter to him what the conclusion was so long as the sausage was produced'.³⁰ Ditties also conveyed a more sinister and scheming portraiture of Hankey:

And so while the great ones depart to their dinner
The Secretary stays, growing thinner and thinner,
Racking his brains to record and report
What he thinks that they ought to have thought.³¹

²³ John F. Naylor, *A Man and an Institution: Sir Maurice Hankey, the Cabinet Secretariat and the Custody of Cabinet Secrecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 43-44; NLS, GD/433/2/6/4/14, Fisher to Balfour, 30 November 1927.

²⁴ TNA, CAB/24/92/89, 'Note by the Secretary to the Cabinet', 10 November 1919.

²⁵ NLS, GD/433/2/17/65-66, Hankey to Balfour, 10 November 1919; TNA, CAB/63/25/37-40, 'Note by Sir Maurice Hankey', 10 November 1919.

²⁶ CAC, HNKY/1/5, 16 November 1919.

²⁷ TNA, CAB/23/18/6, 11 November 1919.

²⁸ Alan Sharp, 'Britain and the Channel Tunnel, 1919-1920', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 25:2 (1979), 210-215 (211).

²⁹ CAC, HNKY/1/5, 16 November 1919.

³⁰ Frederick Leith-Ross, *Money Talks: Fifty Years of International Finance* (London: Hutchinson, 1968), 54.

³¹ CAC, BRGS/1/2, Long to Burgis, 22 June 1955.

Harold Wilson recounted a comparable incident from his time at the Cabinet Office, when Edward Bridges told him to write the minutes for a meeting he had not attended:

I stuttered that I had not been there ... He said that if I had been, I would not have been any better informed "This is your subject. You know what they ought to have decided ... Write the Minutes on those lines, and no one will ever question it." He was right.³²

Richard Crossman subscribed to a similar view as to the importance of the Civil Service as 'keeper of the muniments' and while records undoubtedly matter, government is rarely conducted through carefully crafted phrases with obscure meanings.³³ Implicit in such assertions and recollections of scheming and omnipotence is that the Cabinet Secretary's significance in decision-making processes lay in his ability to craft a misleading impression, insert his own preferences in conclusions, and thus bring his views to bear on policy discussions. The release of Hankey's personal archive, which abounds with boastful hyperbole, compounded this impression. Yet Hankey, and those around him, were not always good judges of his capabilities. Tweaking Cabinet conclusions was a less powerful act than it appeared. The day after Hankey's devious drafting of the conclusions, Lloyd George met a deputation from the Channel Tunnel; he demonstrated his enthusiasm to parliamentarians, stressed that almost all his ministers were supportive, and announced that if the Service Departments were equally favourable, the government would approve the scheme.³⁴

Of far greater significance in Hankey's efforts to influence government policy were his interactions with Balfour. Hankey correctly claimed responsibility for converting Balfour from proponent to opponent.³⁵ Hankey recognised his own relative weakness compared to the internationalist ministers, and thus sought a powerful partner to begin tipping the scales in his favour. He sought derivative influence, whereby a weaker actor appeals to a more powerful actor for support; in this way, actors can amplify their demands through a powerful patron, akin to the 'tail that wags the dog'. Hankey possessed a perceptive understanding of the dynamics of the coalition government and identified Balfour as a valuable and high-capital ally. They had worked

³² Harold Wilson, *The Governance of Britain* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), 53.

³³ Anthony Howard (ed.), *The Crossman Diaries: Selections from the Diaries of a Cabinet Minister, 1964-1970* (London: Mandarin, 1991 edition), 9-10.

³⁴ PA, DAV/122, Channel Tunnel House of Commons Committee: Deputation to the Prime Minister, 12 November 1919.

³⁵ CAC, HNKY/1/5, 16 November 1919.

closely together for over a decade on defence issues, and Balfour was godfather to Hankey's youngest son.³⁶ Balfour had served as Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary and was closely associated with the CID; although ageing, Balfour was Lord President of the Council and a widely respected 'elder statesman'.³⁷ Balfour had vacillated over the tunnel during his career although he had most recently succumbed to arguments in favour of the scheme during the Great War.³⁸

Identifying a malleable target was merely one step towards acquiring an ally. Hankey required access as influence cannot operate at a distance. His position as Cabinet Secretary and Secretary to the CID granted him privileged access to ministers and officials, with whom he developed close relations. Moreover, as a middle-class man handicapped by limited social and economic capital, Hankey recognised from an early age the importance of 'working up an interest' with superiors and colleagues.³⁹ Ingratiating by nature, Hankey never shied from approaching powerful individuals with concerns and request, nor pretended that he was not 'asking more than I ought'.⁴⁰ Although well-placed to lay his views before decision-makers, access alone was insufficient to manipulate minds. That Hankey's memoranda gained traction on multiple occasions speaks to his success in projecting expertise. It also reflects his engagement with soft power tactics.⁴¹ Soft power is fundamentally attractive or co-optive power; allies are secured through persuasion and manipulation to sway preferences. Soft power can be vital for those who lack the power to compel. In drafting persuasive memoranda, Hankey often injected a heavy dose of scaremongering to stoke fears; or drew attention to past events or decisions which offered historical parallels to support his argument; or stressed that a policy option was in the national interest, of which he considered himself to be the best judge. One of the most effective techniques in his toolkit was to offer a clear and straightforward argument, embedded within a bewildering wealth of technical details. This tactic simultaneously impeded ministers from disputing both the thrust and minutiae of the argument, and highlighted Hankey's own authoritative grasp of the issue. To underscore this point, memoranda were often accompanied by a covering letter in which Hankey reminded ministers of his long association with defence policy and his status as Secretary to the CID and chairman of key defence committees.

³⁶ Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets. Volume I, 1877-1918* (London: Collins, 1970), 136.

³⁷ Ruddock F. Mackay, *Balfour: Intellectual Statesman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

³⁸ Wilson, *Channel Tunnel Visions*, 71; TNA, CAB/2/4, 1 July 1924.

³⁹ CAC, HNKY/3/11, Hankey to Hilda, 5 November 1900.

⁴⁰ CRL, AC/54/239, Hankey to Chamberlain, 12 November 1927.

⁴¹ Coined by Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 31-32; Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, 'Two Faces of Power', *The American Political Science Review*, 56:4 (1962), 947-952.

The passage of time only strengthened Hankey's aura of experience and expertise on defence issues. Moreover, Hankey understood that timing and psychology mattered a great deal and confided to his wife that the secret to his success lay in 'insinuating my ideas to each member privately ... and making him think it is his own. Then ... we get our way; whereas if I ... were to spring it on them at the meeting I should probably meet with strong opposition'.⁴²

Hankey also understood the importance of controlling the flow of information to ministers to counteract the influence of proponents, to influence the tone and content of discussions, and to prey upon ministers' dependency. The military inquiry into the scheme centred on the Home Ports Defence Committee (HPDC), a standing sub-committee of the CID which sat under the chairmanship of none other than Hankey himself. This role was distinct from his activities as Secretary to the Cabinet and CID; it demonstrated the significance of occupying multiple nodes in the budding network of resistance to control the flow of information from different angles. The HPDC investigated the technical aspects of the project and examined potential safeguards to mitigate against likely dangers. As Chairman, Hankey steered deliberations and called on experts who raised the alarm that schemes to destroy the tunnel in times of emergency were inadequate.⁴³ In his concluding remarks, the Chairman urged his colleagues to make clear that there were serious risks associated with the proposal and that no safeguards could equal the level of protection afforded by island status.⁴⁴ Hankey simultaneously and covertly undertook a 'great deal of propaganda against the Tunnel ... to set force many ... objections, and to educate the Admiralty War Staff and the War Office General Staff'. As a result, the committee accepted the report 'which was by no means favourable to the tunnel' and which bore striking resemblance to Hankey's personal memoranda.⁴⁵

The report was circulated in January 1920 as expert opinion and ministers were invited to respond. The Service Departments promptly registered their views. The Air Ministry was ambivalent, while the Admiralty was moderately supportive.⁴⁶ The

⁴² CAC, HNKY/3/14, Hankey to Adeline, 28 July 1906.

⁴³ TNA, CAB/21/171, Hankey to Bartholomé, 26 November 1919; CAC, HNKY/1/5, 23 November and 29 November 1919.

⁴⁴ TNA, CAB/12/1, 21 November 1919.

⁴⁵ CAC, HNKY/1/5, 29 December 1919; TNA, CAB/13/1, 'Memorandum by the Home Ports Defence Committee', 17 December 1919.

⁴⁶ TNA, CAB/3/3/95A, Air Ministry to Cabinet Secretary, 31 January 1920; CAB/3/3/93A, Admiralty to Secretary of CID, 24 January 1920.

Secretary of State for War and Air (Winston Churchill) was a strong proponent.⁴⁷ The Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Henry Wilson, was sceptical and reminded his colleagues that much hinged on Britain's future relations with France and raised the prospect of a permanent – and expensive – conscript army.⁴⁸ Then came Balfour's response to the HPDC report. The circulation of this striking document marked the moment when Balfour became affixed to Hankey's network of resistance. The memorandum's stark warning that 'so long as the ocean remains our friend do not let us deliberately destroy its power to help us' was to be quoted frequently over the next decade.⁴⁹ As the war of words continued, the Minister of Health confessed to his colleagues that the HPDC report and Balfour's memorandum preyed heavily on his mind: having previously been a proponent, Christopher Addison admitted that 'there is a real risk'.⁵⁰ Whitehall was an information society in which the ability to select, organise, and prioritise information for submission to higher authorities was a property of power. Information-based resources, including expert knowledge and the circulation of memoranda, were the gateway to accessing non-information-based resources, namely political allies.⁵¹ Hankey sought to transform the information highways into an amplification chamber of continually echoing negativity. Balfour was a vital ally in facilitating this echo-amplification effect by reinforcing the content of the HPDC report and investing such conclusions with his political capital. Indeed, so central was Balfour's intervention that the elder statesman became a 'hub' in the network of resistance.⁵²

Hankey continued in his attempts to steer ministers. He penned a second memorandum – a detailed, forensic analysis of the tunnel scheme which warned that 'objections immeasurably outweigh the advantages'.⁵³ This authoritative document was 'by far the largest paper assembled on the subject by any of the participants in the debate'.⁵⁴ Despite Keith Wilson's assertion that the memorandum was circulated to the Cabinet, it was embargoed by the Prime Minister.⁵⁵ Lloyd George forbade Hankey from distributing his memorandum because he considered it 'inadvisable that the Secretary

⁴⁷ TNA, CAB/3/3/98A, Memorandum, Churchill, 9 February 1920.

⁴⁸ TNA, CAB/3/3/98A, 'Notes on the Military Advantages and Disadvantages of the Channel Tunnel', Wilson, 16 December 1919.

⁴⁹ TNA, CAB/3/3/96A, 'Memorandum by Mr. Balfour', 5 February 1920.

⁵⁰ TNA, CAB/3/3/100A, Memorandum, Addison, 4 March 1920.

⁵¹ Elad Segev, 'Volume and Control: The Transition from Information to Power', *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 14:3 (2019), 240-257 (248).

⁵² 'Nodes', 'hubs' and 'ties' form the core of network theory. For an accessible summary of network theory, see Niall Ferguson, *The Square and the Tower: Networks, Hierarchies and the Struggle for Global Power* (London: Allen Lane, 2017), 15-47.

⁵³ TNA, CAB/63/26/18-30, 'The Channel Tunnel', Hankey, 28 January 1919.

⁵⁴ Sharp, 'Britain and the Channel Tunnel', 213.

⁵⁵ Wilson, *Channel Tunnel Visions*, 130.

should circulate so controversial a document'.⁵⁶ Given Lloyd George's maverick tendencies, such a rebuke arguably stemmed from the premier's recognition that Hankey was working to obstruct the Prime Minister's preferred policy, rather than a genuine concern for constitutional propriety. Hankey, however, understood how to leverage his intimate relations with ministers to bend the 'rules of the game'. Disregarding Lloyd George's rebuke, Hankey sent copies of the full memorandum to Austen Chamberlain (Chancellor of the Exchequer) and George Curzon (Foreign Secretary) in a private capacity.⁵⁷ He thus targeted two of the most powerful ministers, who presided over predominant Whitehall departments and who, having worked closely with Hankey during the testing war years, respected him as an expert in defence affairs.⁵⁸ Furthermore, Hankey raised specific concerns which appeared in his memorandum with relevant ministers, such as immigration worries with Edward Shortt, the Home Secretary.⁵⁹ While the full-length memorandum had a profound effect upon both Chamberlain and Curzon, the tactic of raising individual concerns was less impactful in altering minds.⁶⁰

Hankey also sought to cultivate the collective mind of departments as much as the views of ministers. This is sometimes referred to as 'reserve power', in which the advice given to ministers is agreed upon by officials, to generate an echo chamber of an uncontested 'Whitehall view'.⁶¹ In the Treasury, the newly appointed Permanent Secretary, Warren Fisher, oversaw the preparation of the Treasury view, a document naturally focused on the financial aspects of the tunnel scheme. In a manoeuvre which suggested that the Cabinet Secretary was not close to Fisher at this point, Hankey approached a Treasury official serving on secondment within the Cabinet Secretariat. It might also suggest that Hankey believed the elitist Treasury would be more receptive to information funnelled through one of its own. Frederick Leith-Ross thus became a 'weak tie', connecting Hankey's primary network to an otherwise disparate Treasury microcosm or sub-network.⁶² Hankey encouraged Leith-Ross to report to the Treasury that the estimated defence costs touted by promoters of the scheme were underbudgeted, while technological advancements would also necessitate the continual

⁵⁶ PA, LG/F/24/2/5, Hankey to Lloyd George, 31 January 1920; TNA, CAB/63/26/71, Hankey to Lloyd George, 3 March 1920.

⁵⁷ TNA, CAB/21/171, Hankey to Curzon 2 March 1920 and Hankey to Chamberlain, undated.

⁵⁸ For example, PA, BL/117/1/26, Chamberlain to Bonar Law, 30 November 1915.

⁵⁹ TNA, HO/45/13708, Hankey to Shortt, 27 January 1920.

⁶⁰ TNA, HO/45/13708, Shortt to Hankey, 14 February 1920.

⁶¹ 9-10 April and 18 April 1965 in Howard (ed.), *Crossman Diaries*, 92.

⁶² Ferguson, *The Square and the Tower*, 15-47.

improvement of defences – at great cost to the Treasury.⁶³ Fisher rarely involved himself in the financial side of Treasury work and was absent from the office after ‘suffering with overstrain’.⁶⁴ He passed Leith-Ross’s information to George Barstow, the Controller of Supply Services, and dispatched him to articulate the Treasury’s view. Barstow produced a critical memorandum which highlighted the financial dangers in early February 1920 and of which senior Treasury officials approved.⁶⁵ As Barstow’s position on the tunnel question prior to this point is not known, cause and association cannot be disentangled. Given insufficient evidence to connect Leith-Ross’s report with Barstow’s critical views, it might be more appropriate to consider that there was an anti-tunnel bias operating within the Treasury, independent of Hankey’s efforts to steer the department. It speaks to the recurrent predisposition within elite Whitehall circles to maintaining the status quo. This episode also shines a light on the Cabinet Secretary’s willingness to reach beyond his immediate sphere to construct a broad-based network. In attempting to poach those who occupied a similar position to his own in the relative balance of power, Hankey demonstrated an understanding of the benefits of collective power, whereby weaker actors form alliances to collectively influence more powerful actors.

Nevertheless, Hankey’s efforts within the Treasury were moot as Chamberlain outpaced his officials and submitted his views to the Cabinet before receiving his department’s insights on the subject.⁶⁶ Chamberlain’s memorandum was particularly conspicuous argument for a Chancellor who repeatedly wrote home to complain of the dire financial post-war situation.⁶⁷ Setting aside economic arguments, Chamberlain focused on defence aspects and, in a thundering conclusion, declared that ‘England would exist for the defence of the tunnel rather than the tunnel for the defence of England’. Submitted after he had read the HPDC report, and the memoranda prepared by Balfour and Hankey, Chamberlain’s paper was undoubtedly influenced by these documents. It is impossible to know which memorandum had the greatest impact on Chamberlain, who had not opposed the scheme in Cabinet in November 1919. Indeed, it does not matter; Chamberlain became convinced of the military threat as a direct result of the influence of the network, in which arguments were repeated, reinforced, and

⁶³ TNA, T/175/2, Leith-Ross to Fisher, 28 January and 31 January 1920.

⁶⁴ TNA, T/186/13, Correspondence with Hardman Lever, 7 February 1920.

⁶⁵ TNA, T/175/2, ‘Channel Tunnel Scheme’, undated; T/186/13, Hardman Lever to Fisher, 11 February 1920; T/175/2, Fisher minute, 4 March 1920.

⁶⁶ TNA, CAB/3/3/99A, Memorandum, Chamberlain, 26 February 1920.

⁶⁷ Neville Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 19 July 1919 in Robert Self (ed.), *The Austen Chamberlain Diary Letters, 1916-1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 117.

regurgitated. In turn, Chamberlain joined the network of resistance. He thus contributed to this echo effect and amplified the cause in lending his capital to the network. Moreover, the Chancellor steered the debate firmly towards defence aspects, where Hankey's network stood on the firmest ground. Hankey's quest for derivative influence in targeting Chamberlain was thus a success. Opposition to the Channel Tunnel became prevalent within the Cabinet. Leith-Ross, who had closely observed the way in which Hankey had orchestrated this mountain of opposition, satirised how 'it was generally believed that Hankey had written all these different memoranda so as to line up a solid defence against the scheme'.⁶⁸ Hankey had not, of course, written the critical memoranda which circulated in Cabinet ministers' red boxes, yet he had initiated and guided the process.

Targeting Curzon was another example of the quest for derivative influence. The Foreign Office was tasked with advising on the crucial question of whether relations with France would ever be sufficiently warm as to merit the construction of a Channel Tunnel. Distracted by competing priorities, it was not until late March that the department turned its attention to the subject. The Permanent Under-Secretary, Charles Hardinge, instructed Eyre Crowe (Assistant Under-Secretary) to advise on the matter. By this last point in the debate, most ministers had contributed their views and the bias was firmly against the tunnel. Crowe prepared a meagre summary of the arguments and explained that while 'no categorical answer can safely be made', future French 'hostility cannot be excluded'.⁶⁹ Curzon took exception and insisted that as other 'departments have said frankly yes or no ... we should do likewise. I have a clear idea which answer I would give – seeing the instability of the Continental outlook and remembering the teachings of history. But I do not like to give it without a consideration based on F.O. experience'.⁷⁰ He called on Hardinge to advise. Curzon circulated Hardinge's memorandum on the subject in May 1920; it was the final nail in a coffin which had already been lowered into the grave.⁷¹ Like Chamberlain, Curzon had not registered doubts in Cabinet in November 1919. Influenced by the tone of discussion and the combined authority of views submitted to the Cabinet, Curzon had been converted to the view that the scheme posed a danger. Intriguingly, there is no suggestion that Hankey "educated" either Crowe or Hardinge on the issue. This draws attention to the ways in which network builders can encounter natural allies who require no influencing

⁶⁸ Leith-Ross, *Money Talks*, 54-55.

⁶⁹ TNA, FO/371/3765/187042, Memorandum, Crowe, 21 March 1920.

⁷⁰ Curzon's emphasis. TNA, FO/371/3765/187042, Curzon minute, 7 April 1920.

⁷¹ TNA, FO/371/3765/187042, Hardinge to Curzon, and Curzon minute, 25 April 1920; CAB/3/3/101A, Memorandum, Curzon, 1 May 1920.

or persuasion; it might, in turn, speak to the prevalence of anti-Channel Tunnel sentiment amongst the Whitehall elite and a shared desire to maintain the status quo.

In November 1919, Hankey had confided to his diary that he 'may be able to block the whole thing, though at the moment I seem to stand almost alone in my opposition. I will stop at nothing to prevent what I believe to be a danger to the country'.⁷² By May 1920, most ministers had been converted to the opposition and were enmeshed in a network of resistance. It was, in essence, Hankey's network. This is illustrated below in Figure 3.1, which offers a snapshot of the network of resistance. The directionality of the lines surrounding Hankey shows that information flowed from the Cabinet Secretary, not towards him; he was an influencer who largely succeeded in controlling Whitehall's Gulf Stream. Hankey was a hub whose removal might have crippled the network. Access was also important and a vital asset; it took him just one step to reach crucial supporters such as Balfour and Chamberlain, and only two steps to connect to the Treasury. The 1919-1920 inquiry reveals that the Cabinet Secretary possessed influence, although not power, for he persuaded but did not coerce or command. This ability to obstruct policy change was rooted in superior skill and strategy – as well as a dose of good luck. Hankey understood the 'rules of the game' and was willing to manipulate these to his advantage. Through a range of tactics, including soft power, derivative influence, and collective influence – of which the latter was the least effective – Hankey amplified his arguments and constructed a wide network of actors. The greater capital of this network sunk proponents' arguments and to the disgust of the Channel Tunnel Committee and its allies, Lloyd George quietly abandoned the proposal.⁷³

⁷² CAC, HNKY/1/5, 16 November 1919.

⁷³ PA, DAV/122, Meeting of Channel Tunnel Committee, 5 July 1920.

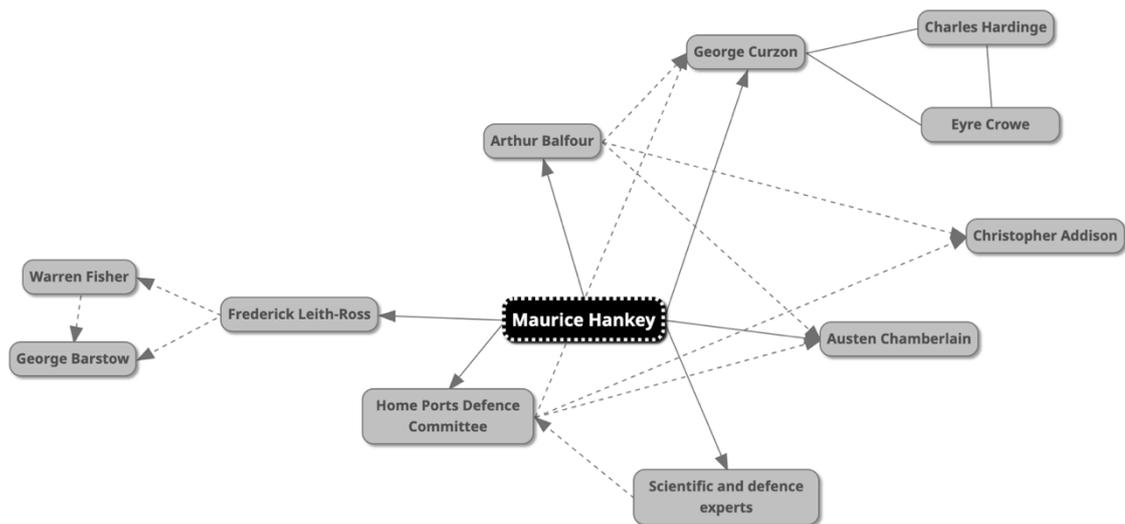


Figure 3.2: A snapshot of the network of resistance during the inquiry of 1919-1920. Arrows signal the directionality of connections and flows of information. Solid lines demonstrate Hankey's primary activities. Dotted lines demonstrate the 'echo' or amplification effects.

The Inquiry of 1924

Proponents were not dissuaded and tried in vain to lobby the Conservative Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, in 1923.⁷⁴ They had more luck with his successor, Ramsay MacDonald.⁷⁵ The Channel Tunnel Committee, now led by William Bull, stressed the advantages of the scheme, including improved Anglo-French relations, and opportunities for trade and employment. MacDonald strongly supported the scheme: he believed that recent developments in air power had profoundly altered the dynamics of national defence and was eager to encourage Anglo-French cooperation.⁷⁶ MacDonald thus referred the matter to the CID for review on 2 June 1924.

The very next day, Hankey launched his campaign against the proposal. He circulated a summary of previous proceedings, in which he positioned himself as an independent commentator informing ministers of prior inquiries in his duty as record-keeper.⁷⁷ However, in drawing attention to the disadvantages of the tunnel and laying

⁷⁴ Hansard, House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series, vol. 165, col. 2533, 28 June 1923.

⁷⁵ CAC, BULL/5/11, Memorandum Presented to the Cabinet, Bull, 31 May 1924.

⁷⁶ CAC, BULL/5/11, Deputation to the Prime Minister, 26 June 1924.

⁷⁷ TNA, CAB/3/4/122A, 'Summary of Previous Proceedings', Hankey, 3 June 1924.

bare the reasons why successive governments had rejected such proposals, Hankey's memorandum amounted to a concerted effort to control the information reaching inexperienced Labour ministers. Furthermore, in his capacity as Cabinet Secretary, Hankey was responsible for soliciting opinions from ministers and departments. He asked Crowe, now Permanent Under-Secretary, for the Foreign Office's view. Crowe decided that the Foreign Office's position had not changed and that Hardinge's 1920 memorandum condemning the scheme should be resubmitted as the department's official advice.⁷⁸ MacDonald, however, was Foreign Secretary as well as Prime Minister. He recognised how the Foreign Office's memorandum would likely impact on his colleagues and refused to permit its circulation. He reminded his officials that he 'regarded this project as (a) military and (b) transport and commerce. The F.O. as such ought to have no over-riding views'.⁷⁹ Dejected, Crowe accepted that the Foreign Office's views were to be disregarded during the inquiry.⁸⁰ This was a disappointment for Hankey, who suffered another setback in his hopes of generating opposition when his efforts with the Minister of Transport were rebuffed. Although Hankey uncovered allies at the Board of Trade, MacDonald continued to pressure his colleagues into adopting or maintain pro-tunnel views, such as circulating a document which stressed the value that the French placed on a Channel Tunnel.⁸¹ Hankey and MacDonald therefore competed to control flows of information to steer ministerial opinion.

Hankey understood that it would be easiest to obstruct the proposal on defence grounds. He turned his attentions to the Chiefs of Staff (COS), who sat collective from 1923 on the COS Sub-Committee and offered expert advice to the Cabinet and CID. It was Hankey who served as Secretary to this sub-committee, once more highlighting the importance of occupying multiple nodes across the central state to control the flow of information. In advance of the meeting of the COS Sub-Committee, Hankey sent the Chief of the Air Staff (Hugh Trenchard) a persuasive and comprehensive memorandum.⁸² He stressed the dangers of a sudden attack on the tunnel, especially given air power developments, and drew on a range of historical and contemporary examples to plant the fear of human or mechanical failure in deploying safeguards. This document may also have been sent to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the First Sea Lord. In a

⁷⁸ TNA, FO/371/10544, W4634/3452/17, Hankey to Crowe, 3 June 1924; Crowe minute, June 1924.

⁷⁹ TNA, FO/371/10544, W4634/3452/17, MacDonald minute, 11 June 1924.

⁸⁰ TNA, FO/371/10544, W4634/3452/17, Crowe to Hankey, 17 June 1924.

⁸¹ TNA, CAB/3/4/126A, 'Note by the President of the Board of Trade', 25 June 1924; CAB/3/4/128A, 'French Official Opinion', 30 June 1924.

⁸² TNA, AIR/8/75, 'Some Observations on the Channel Tunnel', Hankey, 21 June 1924.

highly revealing confession, which demonstrated the extent of his control of information and their intimate relationship, Hankey admitted to Trenchard that the memorandum:

contains a good deal of material which does not appear in any of the papers circulated officially. For the present I am keeping it up my sleeve, for production if the decision should go the wrong way ... I shall say that I have some fresh material and ... dish it up in a form suited to the exigencies of the moment.⁸³

Following a full discussion at the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee, a report was produced. This document bore striking similarities to Hankey's memoranda: it downplayed advantages, stressed the complications of defending the tunnel, and advised the CID that the disadvantages outweighed the advantages.⁸⁴ It is difficult to disentangle cause and association as the views of the Chiefs of Staff prior to Hankey's attempts to "educate" them are not known. It was, nevertheless, a victory. Unlike in 1919-1920, the network of resistance now counted the Service Departments as allies.

Prior to the CID meeting on the issue, memoranda from the 1919-1920 and 1924 inquiries were circulated to members. This material reflected the resilience of the network configured during the earlier inquiry; while Liberal and Conservative ministers no longer held office, their views continued to be projected onto their Labour counterparts. This was due to Hankey's role as the record-keeper and agent of continuity within the central state. He was able to summon the ghosts of Cabinets passed, to 'refreeze' the network which had thawed and obsolesced through political change.⁸⁵ The influence of the network assembled in 1919-1920 was thus significant beyond its immediate purpose. The hefty dossier circulated to the CID included the HPDC report, Balfour and Chamberlain's memorandum, and Hankey's biased historical surveys. Although the Foreign Office's critical view had been censored, the Service Departments' favourable statements from 1920 were now prefaced by the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee unfavourable report. Despite MacDonald's positive note on the importance of relations with France, the collective weight of opinion was unsympathetic to the tunnel proposal, and perhaps even to a greater extent than in 1919-1920. This speaks to the extent to which Hankey had succeeded in determining the tone of information reaching the CID, as well as the wider scepticism towards the project.

⁸³ TNA, AIR/8/75, Hankey to Trenchard, 24 June 1924.

⁸⁴ TNA, CAB/3/4/125A, 'Report of the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee', 24 June 1924.

⁸⁵ 'Refreezing' a group is often attributed, perhaps incorrectly, to Kurt Lewin; Stephen Cummings, Todd Bridgman and Kenneth Brown, 'Unfreezing Change as Three Steps: Rethinking Kurt Lewin's Legacy for Change Management', *Human Relations*, 69:1 (2016), 33-60.

A most unusual gathering of the CID convened on 1 July 1924.⁸⁶ MacDonald, the Chiefs of Staff, various ministers, and Warren Fisher gathered alongside Hankey, who served as Secretary. Also in attendance were four ex-Prime Ministers: Balfour, H.H. Asquith, Lloyd George, and Baldwin. Keith Wilson attributed this innovation to Hankey but did not offer evidence to support the claim. It is likely that Hankey persuaded MacDonald to follow the precedent set by Asquith in 1908 and 1913 when Balfour was invited to the CID for cross-party discussion of a particular issue.⁸⁷ Attendance at CID meetings was always at the Prime Minister's discretion. Persuading MacDonald might not have been a difficult task. He was an inexperienced Prime Minister who had inherited, and depended on, Hankey's intimate knowledge of affairs; he may thus have been susceptible to expert advice on the machinery of government. If the decision to invite ex-Prime Ministers was indeed incited by Hankey, it was clever. He knew that Baldwin had rejected an inquiry; that Balfour remained a key opponent of the scheme; and that Asquith had repudiated the project during his own premiership. These ex-premiers combined with the CID's regular members to form an impressive bulwark to MacDonald's enthusiastic predisposition. During the crucial meeting, the Chiefs of Staff articulated their criticisms and Lord Beatty of the Admiralty contributed to the amplification chamber effect when he quoted from Balfour's memorandum: 'So long as the ocean remains our friend, do not let us deliberately destroy its power to help us'. Balfour and Asquith voiced their opposition and then Lloyd George spoke. He explained that his earlier enthusiasm had been tempered by the military dangers subsequently brought to his attention during the 1919-1920 inquiry. Baldwin concurred with Lloyd George's stark warning that the scheme was 'a very dangerous experiment'. Bereft of allies, MacDonald admitted to his colleagues that he, too, 'had been much impressed by' Balfour's memorandum, yet lamented that the CID opposed construction. MacDonald was less measured in his personal diary about the 'most unsatisfactory meeting' and recounted his 'astonishment at military mind. It has got itself and the country as well in a rut where neither fresh air nor new ideas blow ... My burdens so heavy and so many that I cannot take up the Tunnel at present'.⁸⁸

The 1919-1920 and 1924 case studies reveal much about the dynamic between the Cabinet Secretary and Prime Minister. Hankey was not a stooge of Prime Ministers,

⁸⁶ TNA, CAB/2/4, 1 July 1924.

⁸⁷ Maurice Hankey, *Diplomacy by Conference: Studies in Public Affairs, 1920-1946* (London: Ernest Benn, 1946), 98.

⁸⁸ TNA, PRO/30/69/1753/I, 1 July 1924.

and – more significantly – nor were Lloyd George and MacDonald *his* stooges.⁸⁹ It is perhaps easy to assume that Hankey was able to ‘control’ Prime Ministers because of his excellent relations with them, and that it was through his close association with Prime Ministerial power that Hankey derived his own influence. The Channel Tunnel lens emphasises that excellent relations with Prime Ministers did not necessarily gift Hankey meaningful influence. His relations with MacDonald were personally and professionally warm. Although the reactionary Cabinet Secretary was concerned at the prospect of a Labour Prime Minister, within a few weeks of the Scotsman taking office, Hankey boasted that while they did not always agree on policy, they got on ‘like a house on fire’ and was certain that he had MacDonald’s ‘entire confidence’.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, with neither Lloyd George nor MacDonald was Hankey able to leverage his close relationship and expertise to sway their minds; Lloyd George ignored Hankey’s first memorandum and obstructed the circulation of the second, while MacDonald remained enthusiastic for a tunnel even after exposure to Hankey’s arguments. Furthermore, both premiers, and especially the Scotsman, were hypervigilant of their officials. Shortly after ascending to the political throne, MacDonald confided to his diary that he had begun ‘to see how officials dominate ministers. Details are overwhelming and ministers have no time to work out policy with officials as servants; they immersed in pressing business, with officials as masters. I must take care’.⁹¹ Such hypervigilance did not prevent MacDonald being outmanoeuvred and outargued. More significantly, Labour politicians appeared to share a common suspicion of misbehaving mandarins. Hugh Dalton recalled being watchful of officials:

lest they usurped Ministerial authority. With some of the officials of the Foreign Office, in particular, I had some rough encounters. I was on my guard against attempts by officials to take decisions, on important matters, without reference to Ministers and, worse still, against attempts to dodge, or smudge decisions on which Ministers had already agreed.⁹²

Moreover, forty years after MacDonald’s diary entry, Crossman penned one of his own with striking similarities. Upon taking office, Crossman immediately realised:

the tremendous effort it requires not to be taken over by the Civil Service. My Minister’s room is like a padded cell ... they make sure I

⁸⁹ Hankey did not shy from standing up to MacDonald, see TNA, CAB/21/469, correspondence 22 March and 23 March 1924.

⁹⁰ CAC, BRGS/1/1, Memoir, f. 30; AHKY/1/1/33, Hankey to Ursula, 3 February 1924; CAC, HNKY/3/32, Hankey to Adeline, 2 August 1924.

⁹¹ TNA, PRO/30/69/1753/I, 3 February 1924.

⁹² Hugh Dalton, *The Fateful Years: Memoirs, 1931-1945* (London: Frederick Muller, 1957), 326.

behave right ... they know how to handle me ... One has only to do absolutely nothing whatsoever in order to be floated forward on the stream.⁹³

Supporters were infuriated by the Cabinet's latest rejection and one particularly zealous proponent – Winston Churchill – published a scathing article in the *Weekly Dispatch* in which he hinted at an Establishment plot to obstruct the construction of a Channel Tunnel.⁹⁴ This was true, although in the context of the limited review of 1924, Hankey appeared to play a smaller personal role in resistance than in 1919-1920. The dossier placed before the CID consisted largely of documents from four years prior. One of Hankey's most effective achievements was to 'refreeze' an obsolescent network and continue to leech the capital of those who were no longer in office in a very peculiar form of derivative influence. He was also successful in converting the Chiefs of Staff to his cause, so that the sprawling network of opposition monopolised expert opinion. The 1924 inquiry mirrored that of 1919-1920 in that defence matters took precedence in setting the tone of discussions and strengthened Hankey's ability to dominate. However, there was no guarantee that defence questions would be prioritised in any subsequent inquiry.

The Inquiry of 1929-1930

Stanley Baldwin's second Conservative ministry (1924-1929) resisted demands for another review until 1929, when pressure from the Channel Tunnel Committee, business lobbyists, and the French government stirred the government to launch an inquiry into the military and economic arguments.⁹⁵ Lord Salisbury, the Lord Privy Seal, reassured his cousin, Arthur Balfour, that the Cabinet had only acquiesced because they were 'so confident that the economic difficulties are insurmountable ... they feel that the issue is already decided'.⁹⁶

A majority of the highest echelons of Whitehall remained sceptical of a Channel Tunnel, and a network of officials crystallised independently of Hankey's "education"

⁹³ 22 October 1964 in Howard (ed.), *Crossman Diaries*, 25-27.

⁹⁴ CAC, CHAR/8/200B, *Weekly Dispatch* clipping, 27 July 1924.

⁹⁵ TNA, FO/800/263/208, Aimé-Joseph de Fleuriau to Chamberlain, 19 January 1929; TNA, CAB/23/60/1, 21 January 1929; CAB/23/60/4, 6 February 1929.

⁹⁶ NLS, GD/433/2/18/12, Salisbury to Balfour, 14 March 1929.

efforts. Robert Russell Scott, Controller of Establishments at the Treasury, confided to Horace Hamilton (Permanent Under-Secretary to the Board of Trade) that while there was little scope for Treasury interference if the project was privately financed, he was concerned that Britain's borrowing capacity would be undermined if the government guaranteed the capital. Hamilton, whose department was closely associated with the financial inquiry, was asked to watch the issue 'so that we may have an opportunity of intervening if the necessity should arise'.⁹⁷ Like Hankey, Russell Scott recognised the value of a cross-Whitehall network of intimates and allies for information and support. Russell Scott also selected Gilbert Upcott, Deputy-Controller of Supply Services and an opponent of the tunnel, to represent the Treasury view at an interdepartmental conference.⁹⁸ The critical report produced by this gathering questioned the profitability and projected construction costs of the scheme. However, other departments, such as the Air Ministry, were more divided over a Channel Tunnel. John Slessor – of the Air Ministry planning staff – pressed the advantages of the project on Trenchard.⁹⁹ To Hankey's delight, Trenchard nevertheless remained resiliently committed to the opinion that the tunnel was militarily disadvantageous and warned his department that only evidence of 'genuine great economic advantages' would 'alter his attitude'.¹⁰⁰

As departments considered their positions on the tunnel question, Hankey returned to his successful tactic of derivative power. He targeted a minister who was a close associate and who had previously been an important ally in resisting the Channel Tunnel. Once Chancellor, Austen Chamberlain now occupied an equally powerful node in government as Foreign Secretary. Chamberlain's tenure at the Foreign Office was marked by a series of diplomatic triumphs, from the Locarno Pact to the Kellogg-Briand Pact, and marked the apotheosis of interwar confidence in European stability.¹⁰¹ Rather than defence or economic factors, Hankey understood that diplomatic aspects of the tunnel project would be Chamberlain's primary focus. He therefore sent Chamberlain a press clipping which suggested that the French intended to use the tunnel to entangle Britain in continental affairs and thus compel a more interventionist British foreign policy.¹⁰² The Foreign Office's Western department had written a report which reversed

⁹⁷ TNA, T/161/235, Russell Scott to Hamilton, 24 January 1929.

⁹⁸ TNA, T/161/235, Russell Scott to Upcott, 25 January 1929; Proceedings of the Channel Tunnel Meeting, 28 January 1929.

⁹⁹ TNA, AIR/8/75, Memoranda, Slessor, 26 January 1929 and 19 February 1929.

¹⁰⁰ TNA, AIR/5/706, 'Notes on Conversation with C.A.S. on the Channel Tunnel', February 1929; CAB/21/327, Hankey to Trenchard, 9 April and Trenchard to Hankey, 15 April 1929.

¹⁰¹ David Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain: Gentleman in Politics* (Bolton: Ross Anderson Publications, 1985).

¹⁰² TNA, FO/371/14075, W 1147/634/17, Chamberlain minute, 7 February 1929.

the unfavourable opinion expounded by Hardinge and Crowe and posited that in light of the stability afforded by the League of Nations and post-war treaties, the government had a 'great opportunity of showing (without any real risk whatsoever) their confidence in the peaceful intentions of their neighbours'. Chamberlain was critical of this document and, with Hankey's letter preying on his mind, instructed his officials to investigate the extent to which a tunnel would bind Britain's hands.¹⁰³ The Permanent Under-Secretary, Ronald Lindsay, steered the Foreign Office back to the conservative Hardinge-Crowe axis. In a firm memorandum, Lindsay affirmed that 'permanent friendship' with France was unlikely and underscored that there was no military value to the tunnel unless both sides were held by governments which saw 'absolutely eye-to-eye'.¹⁰⁴ Chamberlain agreed. He confessed that he believed France intended 'that the Tunnel would make [Great Britain] a "Continental Power" with the underlying assumption that once we are continental, we must act with France ... I want my country to be free to make its own choice'.¹⁰⁵ William Tyrrell, Ambassador to France, was a strong proponent of the tunnel scheme and denied such claims. Hankey succeeded in making the Foreign Secretary of the same mind as himself and re-attaching Chamberlain to the network of resistance, although the statesman now occupied a different node in the constellation. While a more Francophile and European-oriented wind was beginning to blow through the Foreign Office, the two most senior figures remained opposed to the project and set the tone of the departmental view.

The most comprehensive economic inquiry into the tunnel since 1883 was conducted by the Peacock Committee, under the direction of Edward Peacock, Director of the Bank of England. Hankey targeted the committee with a series of manoeuvres which he described as 'loading the gun'.¹⁰⁶ When Peacock requested from him information regarding defence plans, Hankey seized the opportunity to highlight the difficulties of putting the tunnel out of action in times of danger.¹⁰⁷ He also contrived to be called as an *expert* witness in November 1929 – an astonishing feat given the committee's *financial* brief – whereupon he elucidated on defence difficulties and stressed the importance of insularity for the preservation of the British character.¹⁰⁸ Not all Hankey's peers were equally keen to air their views, including those who were

¹⁰³ TNA, FO/371/14075, W 1599/634/17, Memorandum, Leeper, 6 February 1929; Chamberlain's minute, 13 February 1929.

¹⁰⁴ TNA, FO/371/14075, W 1600/634/17, Lindsay to Chamberlain, 16 February 1929.

¹⁰⁵ TNA, FO/371/14075, W 1600/634/17, Chamberlain minute, 17 February 1929.

¹⁰⁶ TNA, CAB/21/327, Hankey to A.F. Hemming, 17 October 1929.

¹⁰⁷ TNA, CAB/21/327, Hankey to Peacock, 25 November 1929.

¹⁰⁸ TNA, CAB/58/122, Evidence to the Channel Tunnel Sub-Committee, 13 November 1929.

financial experts. Richard Hopkins, the most senior economic advisor in the Treasury, was summoned to address the Peacock Committee. Hopkins doubted the feasibility and merits of the project, yet he bizarrely begged leave from the Chancellor as he felt uncomfortable 'giving evidence on a matter involving policy'.¹⁰⁹ The Peacock Committee's report of February 1930 was largely favourable. It concluded that engineering difficulties were likely surmountable and that the tunnel would offer substantial economic benefits, although it also recommended that the project should be financed by private capital alone.¹¹⁰ Only Lord Ebbisham, Director of Southern Railway and a former Conservative MP, disagreed and appended a minute of dissent to the report in which he voiced scepticism of trade benefits. Ebbisham also parroted many of Hankey's arguments, including the importance of insularity, but this limited impact demonstrates that the Cabinet Secretary's efforts to control the information reaching the committee were largely unsuccessful. In addition, Hankey had intended to control the advice emanating from the committee. Such hopes were shattered when Francis Hemming, Secretary to the Peacock Committee, failed to show the report to his superior – none other than Hankey – before printing and circulating it on 28 February 1930. Hankey exploded and 'almost sacked him on the spot'.¹¹¹ If Hankey had intended to "spin" the report ahead of its publication, he had lost his opportunity. The Peacock report was a substantial defeat for opponents and there now existed a real danger of the scheme securing approval. By early 1930, Hankey thus faced a triple threat to his efforts to obstruct the scheme. The recalcitrant Baldwin had lost the 1929 election and the enthusiastic MacDonald was once more resident in No. 10 Downing Street. With the change of government, Hankey's network of political allies had been replaced by new ministers of uncertain dispositions towards a Channel Tunnel. And, following a favourable report on the economic merits, defence experts could no longer expect their arguments to be prioritised.

Following the Peacock report, tunnel opponents sought to obstruct the economic inquiry. The Duncan Committee was formed to investigate the issue of government financial assistance to the Channel Tunnel Company. Its membership included J.M. Keynes, Ernest Bevin, and Gilbert Upcott of the Treasury. Hankey ensured that Upcott was fully cognisant of the defects of the scheme, but this was unnecessary as Upcott had already submitted a critical memorandum to the committee, advising that

¹⁰⁹ TNA, T/161/235, Hopkins to Chancellor, 21 November 1929.

¹¹⁰ TNA, PREM/1/89, 'Channel Tunnel Committee: Report', 28 February 1930.

¹¹¹ CAC, ROSK/7/90, Burgis to Roskill, 1967.

the government should not finance the project.¹¹² Both the Duncan Committee and the Cabinet approved this recommendation.¹¹³ Although MacDonald's enthusiasm was untamed, in the increasingly tempestuous financial climate following the Wall Street Crash of 1929, the sceptical Chancellor, Philip Snowden, disputed that expert advice 'convincingly' demonstrated the economic advantages of a tunnel. On Hankey's recommendation, the divided Cabinet sought further advice from Whitehall departments.¹¹⁴ This was a clever tactic, as the Cabinet Secretary was aware of the scepticism within the Treasury, Board of Trade, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, and the Ministry of Labour. At the Treasury, Warren Fisher did not look favourably on the Continent, which he considered to be rife with barbarism and authoritarianism, and 'once observed ... half-seriously, half-humorously, that civilisation ended at the cliffs of Dover'.¹¹⁵ Fisher stridently asserted that the government must not provide 'any financial support of encouragement', to which both Richard Hopkins and Snowden agreed.¹¹⁶ Similar memoranda were circulated by the other departments.¹¹⁷ The significance of external pressure groups should not be underestimated; the National Farmers' Union lobbied both the Treasury and Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries on the damaging effect of a Channel Tunnel for British agriculture.¹¹⁸ As the dust settled, the weight of economic advice was thus that the government should consent to construction, but refrain from providing financial advice. Opponents who sought to obstruct the project on economic grounds were therefore unable to marshal sufficiently compelling arguments to halt the inquiry. The onus thus fell to defence circles.

Hoping to steer the debate to defence issues, Hankey wrote in haste to the Prime Minister on the day the report was circulated and reminded the premier that the CID must be allowed to examine the defence aspects.¹¹⁹ An inquiry was duly commissioned. Once more, Hankey chaired the investigation into safeguards conducted by the Home

¹¹² TNA, T/161/235, Hankey to Upcott, 20 March 1930; CAB/58/114, 'Memorandum Prepared in the Treasury', 14 March 1930.

¹¹³ TNA, CAB/58/114, 'Channel Tunnel Policy Committee: Report', 25 March 1930; CAB/23/63/23, 15 April 1930.

¹¹⁴ TNA, PREM/1/89, Hankey to MacDonald, 14 April 1930.

¹¹⁵ Fisher Papers, Extract from 'Red Tape: The Civil Service Magazine', November 1948.

¹¹⁶ TNA, T/161/235, Fisher to Grigg, 30 April 1930 and Hopkins's minute; CAB/24/212/6, 'Memorandum Prepared in the Treasury', 12 May 1930.

¹¹⁷ For example, TNA, CAB/24/212/8, 'Memorandum by the President of the Board of Trade', 13 May 1930.

¹¹⁸ TNA, T/224/226, Secretary of National Farmers' Union to Chancellor, 17 May 1930; CAB/24/212/20, 'Memorandum by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries', 23 May 1930.

¹¹⁹ TNA, PREM/1/89, Hankey to MacDonald, 28 February 1930.

Defence Committee (HDC).¹²⁰ Throughout April and May 1930, Hankey deftly guided deliberations, ensuring that all difficulties and uncertainties were highlighted, and calling on scientific experts to testify to the weaknesses inherent in the scheme.¹²¹ Hankey thus controlled the information reaching the committee. The HDC report was a highly technical document which emphasised the defence disadvantages of a tunnel and offered meagre confidence in potential safeguards.¹²² The HDC inquiry was thus a victory for the network of resistance and Hankey wasted no time in drawing MacDonald's attention to the report's conclusions.¹²³ Hankey also responded directly to the parallel economic inquiry by inserting a caveat in the report that the tunnel should be government-owned for defence reasons. This contradicted the advice of financial experts and presented decision-makers with a conundrum; while the Exchequer should not finance the project, the tunnel should be owned by the government.

Furthermore, Hankey sought to ensure that the Chiefs of Staff were affixed to his network of resistance. The composition of the COS Sub-Committee had changed since 1924 and now consisted of John Salmond, George Milne, and Charles Madden. All three were receptive to the arguments in the HDC report, as well as a personal memorandum compiled by Hankey.¹²⁴ His submission was the most comprehensive and the most forceful of the memoranda submitted during the 1929-1930 inquiry, dealing with military, political, financial, and psychological factors. He also resurrected his original ally, Balfour, who had died weeks earlier. Hankey latched onto Balfour's lingering capital and echoed that famous phrase for a new generation of ministers and officials: 'so long as the ocean remains our friend, do not let us deliberately destroy its power to help us'. The Cabinet Secretary had requested permission from the Prime Minister to circulate the document, as he had of Lloyd George in 1920. Flashing his expert credentials, Hankey claimed that 'as Chairman of the Home Defence Committee ... for over 18 years, I have been so intimately associated with Home Defence in all its aspects ... I think it is my duty to submit my views on a matter which affects this problem so vitally'.¹²⁵ That MacDonald approved the request adds currency to Hankey's later claim that MacDonald no longer sought to undermine opponents of scheme as the Prime Minister became disenchanted with the French and began to doubt the merits of the tunnel project. At

¹²⁰ Successor to the HPDC.

¹²¹ TNA, CAB/21/327, Hankey to Liddell, Cunningham and Dixon, 8 April 1930; Hankey to Smith, 30 April 1930; TNA, CAB/12/2, 29 April 1930.

¹²² TNA, CAB/3/5/175A, 'Memorandum by the Home Defence Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence', 22 May 1930.

¹²³ TNA, CAB/21/327, Hankey to MacDonald, 29 May 1930.

¹²⁴ TNA, CAB/3/5/174A, 'Some Imperial Defence Aspects', Hankey, 22 May 1930.

¹²⁵ TNA, CAB/21/327, Hankey to MacDonald, 20 May 1930.

the same time, Hankey wasted no chance to cultivate the minds of ministers and officials. On one occasion, he used the opportunity afforded by a dinner at the Egyptian Legation to explain to Hugh Dalton, then Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, how Britain's 'absolute security ... would vanish with the Channel tunnel'.¹²⁶ When the COS Sub-Committee convened to discuss the tunnel, the trend of opinion was not favourable to the scheme.¹²⁷ Nevertheless, Hankey acted beyond his role as Secretary during the meeting; his usual silence was replaced with repeated interjections to raise key arguments and steer the discussion; he thus reinforced crucial arguments and generated an amplification chamber for the HDC report and his own memorandum to emphasise the impression of consensus and congruence of thinking among defence experts. The strident COS report declared that 'the Channel Tunnel involves a heavy military commitment without any corresponding advantage' and thus signalled the success of Hankey's tactics in stirring opposition within defence circles.¹²⁸

The CID convened on 29 May 1930 to consider the economic and defence arguments.¹²⁹ In attendance were MacDonald, the Chiefs of Staff, various ministers, two ex-premiers (Lloyd George and Baldwin), as well as officials including Robert Vansittart and Hankey. Once the defence aspects had been laid out, MacDonald called on Vansittart, who represented the Foreign Office in the Foreign Secretary's absence. This was in stark contrast to 1924, when MacDonald muzzled Crowe. Given the close cooperation between MacDonald and Vansittart over Anglo-French affairs in this period, the Prime Minister cannot have been in any doubt as to the Permanent Under-Secretary's views. This suggests that MacDonald wished to air the diplomatic arguments against the project to amplify opposition. Vansittart admitted that the Foreign Office believed such a tunnel 'would tend to incommode us in our relations with Continental Powers ... both Germany and France would consider the construction of a Tunnel as a definite link and bond between Great Britain and France, and this would seriously embarrass us in the diplomatic sphere'. Thus, except for William Tyrrell, five successive Permanent Under-Secretaries rejected the scheme for a Channel Tunnel, pointing to a dominant worldview at the highest level of the Foreign Office. Moreover, both former Prime Ministers voiced doubts about the proposal, and Lloyd George drew particular attention to Hankey's 'unanswerable' memorandum on the dangers. Greatly embellishing the truth, MacDonald reminded his colleagues that the Peacock report offered 'no economic or

¹²⁶ 16 April 1930 in Ben Pimlott (ed.), *The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton, 1918-40, 1945-60* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1986), 103.

¹²⁷ TNA, CAB/53/3/8, C.O.S. (91), 26 May 1930.

¹²⁸ TNA, CAB/3/5/176A, 'Report by the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee', 27 May 1930.

¹²⁹ TNA, CAB/2/5, 29 May 1930.

financial advantages'; from a diplomatic perspective, the tunnel 'must embarrass us as it would tend to tie us to the policy that France desired'; and from the military standpoint, it would add 'to our responsibilities without in any way adding to our strength'. The CID thus opposed construction and the Cabinet subsequently published a White Paper on the Channel Tunnel.¹³⁰ The network of resistance, illustrated below in Figure 3.2, once more claimed victory.

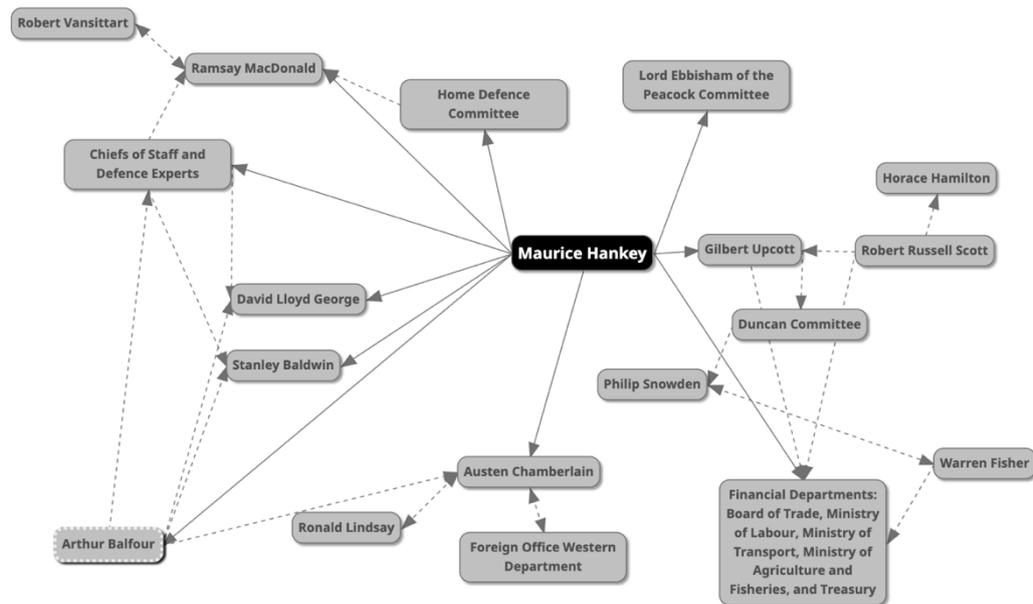


Figure 3.2: A snapshot of the network of resistance during the inquiry of 1929-1930. Arrows signal the directionality of connections and flows of information. Solid lines demonstrate Hankey's primary activities. Dotted lines demonstrate other activity within the network.

Outraged proponents declared the inquiry to be 'prejudiced from start to finish'.¹³¹ *The Manchester Guardian* criticised the government for repeating 'ancient shibboleths' and bowing to 'insular prejudice', while the *Sunday Dispatch* claimed that the 'bogies have whispered into the ears of the fainthearted'.¹³² Nevertheless, the government won an indicative vote on the divisive issue by 179 to 172 votes.¹³³ Such numbers strongly contrast proponents' claims to own the support of 400 MPs and suggests that either the strength of supporters had been exaggerated, or that parliamentarians' views had changed after reading the White Paper. A number of individuals inside and beyond Whitehall took exception to Hankey's tactics, including

¹³⁰ TNA, CAB/23/64/8, 4 June 1930; House of Commons, Command Paper 3591, 4 June 1930.

¹³¹ CUL, Baldwin 2/399-404, 'A Reply to the Government's Decision', 24 June 1930.

¹³² TNA, CAB/21/327, clippings from *The Manchester Guardian*, 7 June 1930 and *Sunday Dispatch*, 8 June 1930.

¹³³ Hansard, House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series, vol. 240, cc. 1687-1744, 20 June 1930.

Charles Portal of the Air Ministry, who recognised that Hankey had misrepresented evidence when “educating” his colleagues.¹³⁴ Hugh Dalton noted how Hankey’s ‘swollen’ head had ‘grown too big’ for his office.¹³⁵

Similarly, a journalist approached the press magnate, Lord Beaverbrook, with an article which attacked Hankey for his ‘monomania on the subject of the Channel Tunnel ... vouched for by my brother-in law who is on the Committee of National Defence’.¹³⁶ Beaverbrook did not print the leader, claiming that he and his readers were too bored with the long-running tunnel question. Yet he admitted to possessing a ‘great contempt for the Jew boy Hankey’ and offered Colonel Sewell the opportunity to ‘disclose ... [Hankey] as the nigger in the woodpile’.¹³⁷

For opponents of the tunnel, it was a moment to celebrate. *The Sunday Times* praised ministers for rejecting the scheme on the grounds of ‘common sense’, while *The Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Mail* were equally congratulatory.¹³⁸ In elated triumph and preparing for a holiday after the long struggle, Hankey wrote to his son:

I have killed it! I have! With the knife of common sense! ... the demise of the project will be announced on Thursday ... By that time the assassin will be en route to Vienna ... I expect W[illiam] T[yrrell] won’t like it. He seems to favour all weak and sickly things, like Freedom of the Seas, and the Channel Tunnel. I have killed ‘em both, because I knew what I wanted, and I will kill them again, whenever they crop up ... The French intransigence at the Naval Conference did the trick. The PM made up his mind that he didn’t want to be tied by the leg to such blighters. Naturally I made the most of that ...¹³⁹

There is significant evidence to support the claim that difficulties with the French converted MacDonald to the opposition. In early 1930, the Prime Minister confided to Vansittart, with whom he enjoyed long gossips about international affairs, that the French were being very difficult at the London Naval Conference.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, entries in MacDonald’s diary between January and April 1930 abound with criticisms of the

¹³⁴ TNA, AIR/8/75, Portal to Salmond, 28 May 1930.

¹³⁵ 1 June 1930 in Pimlott (ed.), *Dalton Diary*, 115-116.

¹³⁶ PA, BBK/H/64, Colonel Sewell to Beaverbrook, 14 January 1929.

¹³⁷ PA, BBK/H/64, Beaverbrook to Sewell, undated.

¹³⁸ TNA, CAB/21/327, clippings from *The Sunday Times*, 8 June 1930, *The Daily Telegraph*, 7 June 1930, and *Daily Mail*, 7 June 1930.

¹³⁹ CAC, HNKY/3/37, Hankey to Robin, 1 June 1930.

¹⁴⁰ TNA, PRO/30/69/676, MacDonald to Vansittart, 17 March 1930.

French, including: 'French diplomacy continues to show its consistent crookedness'.¹⁴¹ While the Prime Minister's passions had somewhat cooled by the end of the Naval Conference, MacDonald's exposure to French intransigence and trickery had undoubtedly coloured his views.¹⁴² That MacDonald allowed Hankey and critics at the Foreign Office a free hand to voice their opposition was telling. Yet perhaps most revealing of MacDonald's conversion is his diary entry recording – yet not lamenting – the outcome of the inquiry.¹⁴³ As well as distancing MacDonald from the French, the Naval Conference brought Hankey and MacDonald into increasingly close association. While Hankey found MacDonald's working methods trying, he was close to the Scotsman and was firmly embedded in the premier's inner-circle.¹⁴⁴ MacDonald also greatly appreciated Hankey's talents – so much so that he heaped effusive, public praise on Hankey when the conference closed. MacDonald's unreserved tribute conveyed great affection and appreciation for the Cabinet Secretary:

All the virtues and ability and the resource and dispensableness which Sir Maurice shows you when you meet him at international conferences occasionally, he shows to me every hour of the day. There is no man with whom I have come into personal relationship who has impressed me more with his extraordinary capacity to yield public service than my friend Sir Maurice Hankey.¹⁴⁵

Hankey was partly correct in labelling himself the 'assassin', although he was closer to the truth in identifying the vital role played by MacDonald. MacDonald's support was crucial because of the government's promise not to allow defence concerns to override economic benefits. His decision to brush aside the recommendations of the Peacock report thus allowed defence arguments to reign supreme. MacDonald was therefore a critical node for both proponents and opponents; the loss of his support crippled proponents' and secured victory for opponents. Yet what is perhaps most intriguing is that MacDonald was not captured or converted by opponents through amplification chambers or the control of information. His volte-face was instead driven by proponents' inability to maintain his support; in particular, he was estranged and alienated from that rival network by the failure of French diplomacy. Keith Wilson asserted that the 1929-1930 inquiry returned a negative response because it was hijacked by 'that happy little band of Little Englanders, the insiders of Whitehall and of

¹⁴¹ TNA, PRO/30/69/1753/1, January-April 1930.

¹⁴² David Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1977), 517.

¹⁴³ TNA, PRO/30/69/1753/1, 29 May 1930.

¹⁴⁴ CAC, HNKY/3/36, Hankey to Robin, 3 July 1929.

¹⁴⁵ TNA, CAB/29/119, London Naval Conference, Sixth Session, 22 April 1930, p. 19.

the old services ...' He stressed the role of the Duncan Committee in getting the Labour government 'off the hook' following the Peacock Committee's favourable report.¹⁴⁶ Yet Wilson was mistaken: the Duncan Committee merely clarified from where the project's capital should be sourced. Economic opponents were ultimately unable to marshal a sufficiently strong case against the tunnel and obstruction instead manifested from two sources. The first emanated from defence circles. However, the network assembled against the tunnel stretched far beyond defence experts. Unlike in previous inquiries, defence arguments alone would not have been sufficient to counteract the advantages outlined in the Peacock report. For this season, the second – and most powerful – manifestation of obstruction came from the Prime Minister. Rumours of Establishment conspiracies and reactionary soldiers overlooked that it was MacDonald's late conversion to the cause and his willingness to negate any economic merits which saved the day. This in turn reinforces the crucial theme that many of the most important interventions in the inquiry came from ministers rather than mandarins.

Conclusion: Power and Influence

The Channel Tunnel case study emphasises the importance of networks and the interplay between individuals and the wider community in understanding power. Whitehall was vast and Hankey would have achieved far less acting alone. It is, of course, ludicrous to suppose that any civil servant 'monopolized access to the levers of power'.¹⁴⁷ Hankey was the spider at the centre of the web. His centrality allowed him to reach important actors and, to a considerable extent, he controlled the dissemination of information around the network. It was also Hankey's continued oversight and activities which reconfigured the network between inquiries. At the same time, Hankey's reliance on professionals, mandarins, and ministers alike to obstruct the tunnel scheme highlights the significance of a wide-angle lens in studying decision-making. It ultimately suggests that greater appreciation of lateral and diagonal activity between departments, rather than purely vertical activity within a departmental, is vital. Indeed, the diversity of network was its strength: nodes stretched across the central state and wielded different skills, expertise, and powers to cut away at the tunnel proposal from

¹⁴⁶ Wilson, *Channel Tunnel Visions*, 177-178.

¹⁴⁷ Peter Barberis, *The Elite of the Elite: Permanent Secretaries in the British Higher Civil Service* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1996), 19.

different angles. Moreover, a study of networks challenges the cult of the individual within much of the historiography on the Civil Service; in essence, that an individual is the most important element within a system and can be studied without sustained reference to the wider community. Individuals do matter, but they matter collectively, not individually.

Power can be defined in many ways. For example, power can be conceived of as a relationship in the formulation that 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do'.¹⁴⁸ While it is impossible to guess the outcome of the Channel Tunnel inquiry without Hankey's participation and thus the counter-factual can never be fully explored, it is evident in Hankey's ability to alter individuals' preferences that he did possess this form of influence. A different conception of influence – defined as the ability to secure outcomes – can also be helpful in understanding power dynamics. Although it would be absurd to claim that Hankey was more powerful than Lloyd George in 1920 because the Cabinet Secretary succeeded in obstructing a policy option, it is fair to state that the *combined* power of the network of resistance was greater than that of proponents. Furthermore, power understood as resources explains why Hankey targeted particular individuals who possessed resources which he lacked, such as a seat at the decision-making table.

Hankey once claimed to be an 'assassin'. This was partially correct, for he orchestrated the attacks yet did not deliver the fatal blows. He was able to assume the role of the spider at the centre of the web because of his resources, relationships, and tactics. It is thus important to consider the assets he commanded, and which underpinned his influence. In a revealing letter to an associate, Hankey once outlined what he believed to be the key ingredients in his quest for influence. He described the importance of intimate relations with, and access to, ministers and the Service chiefs, as well as technical knowledge to construct an expert identity and win the confidence of others. Hankey added: 'You must get yourself regarded and treated as one who is never out ... for anything but the public interest'.¹⁴⁹ Hankey's self-reflection in this instance was very truthful.

The most important instrument in Hankey's toolkit was information. His understanding of technical defence issues and his reputation as an expert empowered

¹⁴⁸ Dahl, 'The Concept of Power', 202-203.

¹⁴⁹ CAC, HNKY/4/30, Hankey to Shedden, 10 January 1938.

him to write such powerful, fearmongering, and even confounding memoranda, while his commanding knowledge of the machinery of decision-making allowed him to subvert the 'rules of the game' in his own favour. It was Hankey's skill – perhaps even luck – in occupying so many important nodes in the decision-making apparatus which permitted him to maintain a tight control of information and turn the information highways reaching those who mattered into amplification chambers.¹⁵⁰ This added legitimacy to the views expounded by opponents and projected a misleading aura of universality to the anti-tunnel arguments, thus further encouraging ministers to obstruct the Channel Tunnel scheme. Such a phenomenon arguably brings to life Max Weber's striking warning that the bureaucracy might dominate elected politicians through 'special knowledge of facts', superior understanding of processes, and access to past records.¹⁵¹ Moreover, that Hankey occupied so many nodes across central government underscores the importance of access. As Secretary to the Cabinet, he could freely bring any matter to the attention of a minister or departmental official; his roles within the CID brought him into close association with the Service Departments. This proximity allowed Hankey to cultivate close relations and to raise his concerns with a range of important actors. One of the most intriguing aspects of Hankey's influence in the Channel Tunnel case study is that it did not derive from his intimate relations with successive Prime Ministers. Neither the inexperienced Scotsman, nor the Welshman with whom Hankey had forged the deepest bonds in the darkest days of war and who remained his favourite 'chief', succumbed to Hankey's arguments.¹⁵² That both Lloyd George and MacDonald eventually became affixed to the network of resistance had little to do with Hankey's powers of persuasion. Hankey neither rode the coattails of prime ministerial power, nor puppeteered weak premiers to dance to his tune. He secured derivative influence from other political actors, such as Balfour and Chamberlain, and joined in collective influence with other mandarins who sought to obstruct policy change. In this way, he unlocked both derivative and collective forms of influence – of which derivative was the most important – to construct a broad-based network. The network harnessed and ultimately leached capital from actors to imbibe the cause with sufficient weight to sink the tunnel proposal.

¹⁵⁰ Tony Benn claimed to have witnessed such a phenomenon. Tony Benn, 'Manifestos and Mandarins', in *Policy and Practice: The Experience of Government* (London: Royal Institute of Public Administration, 1980), 57-78 (65-72).

¹⁵¹ Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation* (New York: The Free Press, 1964), 339.

¹⁵² CAC, ROSK/7/85, Henry to Roskill, 6 July 1969; CAC, HNKY/3/32, Hankey to Adeline, 5 August 1924.

Like Hankey, officials could press for a particular policy outcome by manipulating minds, constructive networks, and manoeuvring deftly behind the scenes. Calculating and cunning, Hankey frequently explored the limits of his influence. One of his colleagues appropriately noted that Hankey, whom he believed to be 'greedy for power' possessed influence which was 'subterranean and indirect' and achieved through 'such torturous methods, which can easily border on intrigue'.¹⁵³ This was particularly true in defence matters, while Hankey demonstrated no interest in domestic affairs.¹⁵⁴ He was not restricted by a narrow conception of his role and therefore did not consider his actions to be unconstitutional or in violation of principles of Civil Service impartiality and neutrality. In contrast, the Cabinet Secretary justified that, as a military expert who understood the issues better than anyone else, he had a duty to defend the national interest. Hankey believed that he alone knew best and could even envisage himself as a minister and several times threatened resignation over policy issues.¹⁵⁵ Not all Hankey's elite colleagues were equally willing to strain the limits of their offices to the same degree. It was ultimately determination and personality which coloured the ways in which mandarins understood their roles.

Obstructive influence lies at the heart of this chapter. Rather than the parallel phenomenon, constructive influence, to realise policy change, obstructive influence signifies manipulating the decision-making apparatus to block a policy option. While this highly significant and revealing distinction has thus far been largely overlooked, critics of the Civil Service detected something akin to this in their dealings with officials. Most notably, Shirley Williams described the Civil Service as a 'beautifully designed and effective braking mechanism. It produces a hundred well-argued answers against ... change'.¹⁵⁶ Peter Hennessy has been more generous in characterising something similar as the 'gyroscope' effect, in which mandarins offer permanence and balance, in contrast to party-political fluctuations.¹⁵⁷ Obstructive influence was real and highly effective; officials found it easier to wield than constructive influence. Hankey and his allies were arguably so successful because they had a more straightforward task than proponents. While the onus rested on proponents to present a watertight case and justify change, opponents had only to plant doubts, cast aspersions, and unravel arguments. The British

¹⁵³ 25 December 1933 in Brian Bond (ed.), *Chief of Staff: The Diaries of Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Pownall. Volume I: 1933-1940* (London: Leo Cooper, 1972), 29-30.

¹⁵⁴ CAC, BRGS/1/1, Memoir, f. 23.

¹⁵⁵ Michael Fry, *And Fortune Fled: David Lloyd George, the First Democratic Statesman, 1916-1922* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 42; CAC, HNKY/4/19, Hankey to Jones, 19 November 1927.

¹⁵⁶ Shirley Williams, 'The Decision Makers', in *Policy and Practice*, 79-102 (81).

¹⁵⁷ Peter Hennessy, *The Hidden Wiring: Unearthing the British Constitution* (London: Indigo, 1996), 127.

state rarely favoured change and opponents preyed upon the security and stability of the status quo in harnessing fears of the unknown. In this way, the Channel Tunnel study illuminates prevailing mindsets in central government. While Hankey was a committed member of the 'bluewater school', which stressed the importance of the sea in Britain's security and development, only a handful of the individuals who opposed the tunnel subscribed to such views. It was, to a greater extent, his reactionary, traditionalist, and conservative mindset which was shared by many opponents. This was not a universal attitude and although it characterised the mindset of many mandarins at the peak of departments, a growing number of officials held more internationalist and cooperative views as the winds of change began to blow.

Chapter Four: Policy Networks and Constructive Influence

Power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together ...¹

Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.²

This chapter centres on the influence of the Whitehall elite in policymaking. It explores the antithesis of obstructive influence. Constructive influence refers to the capacity to generate change, such as in policy decisions. The chapter uses the case study of the Defence Requirements Committee (DRC) as a lens through which to examine the extent to which elite officials succeeded in wielding constructive influence. It also illuminates the tactics deployed by elite officials, as well as the ways in which mandarins simultaneously competed and collaborated in the pursuit of their policy goals.

The Defence Requirements Committee was established in November 1933 to review defence deficiencies. It comprised the Chiefs of Staff and three civilians: Warren Fisher, Maurice Hankey, and Robert Vansittart. The DRC has been the subject of intense interest, to a degree which few committees can equal, particularly amongst historians who debate the extent to which it marked the first step on the road to rearmament.³ Eschewing a focus on this well-worked theme in the historiography of interwar politics, this chapter instead uses the DRC to examine the activities of elite officials, the

¹ Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1972), 143.

² Attributed to Henry Ford.

³ Norman H. Gibbs, *Grand Strategy, Volume I: Rearmament Policy* (London: HMSO, 1976); G.C. Peden, *British Rearmament and the Treasury, 1932-1939* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1979); Gaines Post, Jr., *Dilemmas of Appeasement: British Deterrence and Defense, 1934-1937* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993); B.J.C. McKercher, 'From Disarmament to Rearmament: British Civil-Military Relations and Policy Making, 1933-1934', *Defence Studies*, 1:1 (2001), 21-48; Keith Neilson, 'The Defence Requirements Sub-Committee, British Strategic Foreign Policy, Neville Chamberlain and the Path to Appeasement', *The English Historical Review*, 118:477 (2003), 651-684; Chris Cooper, "'We have to cut our coat according to our cloth": Hailsham, Chamberlain, and the Struggle for Rearmament, 1933-4', *The International History Review*, 36:4 (2014), 653-672.

significance of networks, and the exercise of power. A wealth of evidence for the DRC survives in personal and official archival collections, which permits the reconstruction of decision-making, the tracing of machinations behind the scenes, and the disentangling of cause from association. These are vital in understanding influence and agency. Yet the DRC is more than simply a convenient porthole. It represented a period when officials acting in unison possessed a great opportunity to change the status quo. If elite officials were able to wield constructive influence, this is where historians are most likely to uncover the phenomenon. The trio of mandarins were at the zenith of their professional careers in the early 1930s. They had carved out, and consolidated, spheres as trusted, expert advisors and were securely established at the apex of their respective departments, which were in turn the predominant organs of Whitehall: the Treasury, the Cabinet Office, and the Foreign Office. They enjoyed good personal relations and this intimacy underpinned and facilitated professional cooperation. They were also on excellent terms with leading politicians in the National Government. Deeply embedded within mandarin and ministerial networks, Fisher, Hankey, and Vansittart enjoyed access to individuals and privileged information. They possessed, moreover, both a strong understanding of the 'rules of the game' in Whitehall and a wily willingness to scheme and plot in the pursuit of their goals. Furthermore, they were united behind a common goal – to change the status quo and ameliorate defence deficiencies. Their efforts were assisted by the gradual economic recovery following the Great Depression, as well as the darkening international scene as threats to British national and imperial security emerged in Japan, in Germany, and in Italy. In this highly favourable situation, it appeared that the triumvirate held all the cards. The subsequent limitations encountered in leveraging their considerable resources into influence speaks to the difficulties of generating and wielding constructive influence.

The chapter begins by illuminating the relationships between Fisher, Hankey, and Vansittart. The second section contextualises the origins of the DRC inquiry within the trio's attempts to set the policymaking agenda. The third section then centres on the committee's inquiry and directly interrogates the concept of collective influence, the phenomenon whereby actors of a similar status in the relative balance of power in central government use shared interests to build coalitions, which are then leveraged into influence over more powerful actors. This section explores the working methods and range of tactics deployed by mandarins to secure desired outcomes. It highlights moments of unity, as well as tension and discord as strains within shifting alliances threatened to derail constructive influence efforts. A crucial theme is thus the extent to which the group dynamic in the DRC was one of 'competitive cooperation' and a 'team

of rivals'.⁴ The last section then shifts the focus to the activities of ministers who considered the DRC's recommendations. It explores the interplay between ministerial deliberations and officials' continued attempts to lobby and steer politicians. In this way, it examines derivative influence, whereby weaker actors seek to manipulate the preferences of more powerful decision-makers to bring their influence to bear on a policy discussion.

Personalities and Relations

Illuminating the relations between Fisher, Hankey, and Vansittart is vital to understanding the group dynamic of the DRC. As illustrated in chapter one, these mandarins had been shaped by different life experiences, yet by the early 1930s, each stood at the peak of a central Whitehall department.

The most diplomatic and least temperamental of the three, Maurice Hankey was respected for his skills in conciliation. While Hankey's diary sometimes bubbled with touchiness, anger, or frustration, his ability to maintain his position at the centre of government for over two decades, and to win the confidence of five Prime Ministers, suggests that he could sustain warm relations with a wide circle of ministers and officials – and was adept at hiding grievances in public. Hankey was a skilled operator and could recognise when tactical compromise was required to prevent outright defeat. His knowledge of the central government machine and defence matters were arguably unmatched. In contrast, Robert Vansittart was a far more emotional character. He could be excitable, charming, and humorous, and was far more skilled than Hankey or Fisher in the art of socialising.⁵ Yet he possessed a mercurial temperament. Vansittart was literary and published plays and poetry, and this theatrical vein perhaps reflected a darker side to his personality.⁶ Vansittart was often overly sensitive and prickly. He suffered from a nervous, bordering on hysterical, disposition; he struggled with depression, coped poorly with stress, and was unpredictable in a crisis. Combined with

⁴ Borrowed from David Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance, 1937-41: A Study in Competitive Cooperation* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); and Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (London: Penguin, 2009).

⁵ 7 May 1930 in Ben Pimlott (ed.), *The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton, 1918-40, 1945-60* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1986), 105.

⁶ Norman Rose, *Vansittart: Study of a Diplomat* (London: Heinemann, 1978), 85.

a strong streak of impulsiveness and intransigence, these characteristics gradually consolidated Vansittart's reputation as an unreliable, shrill alarmist as the 1930s turned sour.⁷ The most enigmatic of the three was Warren Fisher. He liked to devote his time to the general oversight of the Civil Service and Treasury, rather than the detail of financial policy. Like Hankey, he was a keen plotter and a smooth operator. There was a school boyishness to the pleasure Fisher derived from intrigues and gossips with officials and ministers. A contemporary even recalled him exclaiming during one plot, 'What fun it all is!'⁸ However, similarly to Vansittart, this *joie de vivre* obscured a darker side. Fisher was highly emotional and volatile. He disposed quickly of intimate friends and bore deep grudges. Even those who worked alongside him for years found it impossible to decipher, or manage, his unstable character. Nevertheless, like Hankey and Vansittart, Fisher was successful in developing strong bonds with successive Prime Ministers. All three officials could be fearless and direct in giving governments 'not the advice they wanted, but what they should have', and tenaciously fighting for their views.⁹

Despite their differences, the trio enjoyed warm relations. They were known to each other by their Christian names – most unusually for Fisher and Hankey – or in Vansittart's case, by his ubiquitous nickname, 'Van'. Hankey and Fisher shared the longest association, dating from at least 1919. They clashed most famously over the future of the Cabinet Office in 1922, when Fisher attempted to annex the department to the Treasury and thus protect his own predominant position from encroachment by an increasingly influential Cabinet Secretary.¹⁰ Hankey outmanoeuvred Fisher and secured the independence of the Cabinet Office; thereafter, they became firm friends and were rarely rivals.¹¹ Hankey and Vansittart were also long acquainted. By the late 1920s, they were 'pals' and frequently lunched together.¹² While relations were occasionally strained over contentious foreign and defence policy issues, Hankey and Vansittart were on friendly terms and often cooperated on schemes.¹³ Vansittart had only kind things to say about Hankey in his memoirs – a distinction afforded to an infinitesimally small

⁷ Rose, *Vansittart*, 152; Michael L. Roi, *Alternative to Appeasement: Sir Robert Vansittart and Alliance Diplomacy, 1934-1937* (Westport: Praeger, 1997), especially 125-161.

⁸ Ann Bridge, *Permission to Resign: Goings-on in the Corridors of Power* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1971), 90.

⁹ Fisher Papers, 'Red Tape: The Civil Service Magazine' extract, November 1948.

¹⁰ Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets. Volume II, 1919-1931* (London: Collins, 1972), 320.

¹¹ John Naylor, *A Man and an Institution: Sir Maurice Hankey, the Cabinet Secretariat and the Custody of Cabinet Secrecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 71; 99-107.

¹² CAC, HNKY/3/35, Hankey to Robin, 19 Feb 1928.

¹³ CAC, HNKY/1/7, 3 Oct 1932.

number of his contemporaries.¹⁴ Vansittart and Fisher's relationship was more tempestuous. While attached to the Prime Minister's private office at No. 10 Downing Street, Vansittart worked closely with Fisher, including during the Francs scandal.¹⁵ As explored in the first chapter on promotions, there is a tenacious assumption within much of the literature that Fisher secured Vansittart's promotion to Permanent Under-Secretary, yet there is a dearth of reliable evidence to support this claim.¹⁶ No sooner had Vansittart settled himself in the grand Permanent Under-Secretary's office than he and Fisher clashed over administrative and inter-departmental affairs.¹⁷ Such differences did not preclude friendship or professional respect, nor collaboration on defence issues. As is examined in the final chapter, Vansittart and Fisher's relationship was complicated in later years and Vansittart paid a characteristically double-edged tribute to Fisher and their fluctuating relations in his memoirs: 'He was the best friend that I ever had in adversity, less good in better days'.¹⁸ The early 1930s – and especially their cooperation on defence issues – were the 'better days' for Vansittart and Fisher.

Thus, by 1933, Fisher, Hankey, and Vansittart were a triumvirate. Each possessed similar status within the Whitehall balance of power and had at their fingertips considerable resources. Moreover, they recognised the importance of cultivating relations with fellow mandarins, harnessing networks, and working cooperatively to realise goals.¹⁹

The Origins of the Inquiry

One of the first steps in achieving constructive influence is agenda-setting, the ability to place issues on the policy agenda for discussion.²⁰ In the context of rearmament, officials had first to secure the cancellation of the Ten-Year Rule, and then to guide discussions on which alternative principle should underpin defence estimates.

¹⁴ Robert Vansittart, *The Mist Procession: The Autobiography of Lord Vansittart* (London: Hutchinson, 1958), 164; 263.

¹⁵ This scandal is discussed in chapter two.

¹⁶ For instance, Donald Graeme Boadle, 'Sir Robert Vansittart at the Foreign Office, 1930-1938' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1980), 5-6; Rose, *Vansittart*, 68-69; Eunan O'Halpin is one of the few historians to disagree, *Head of the Civil Service: A Study of Sir Warren Fisher* (London: Routledge, 1989), 184.

¹⁷ For example, see correspondence in FO/371/15671.

¹⁸ Vansittart, *Mist Procession*, 350.

¹⁹ Roi, *Alternative to Appeasement*, 4; Roskill, *Hankey, Volume II*, 574-575.

²⁰ Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1974), 21-23.

The Ten-Year Rule was a self-perpetuating planning doctrine which assumed that Britain would not fight a large-scale war for a decade, and which guided defence estimates between 1919 and 1932. It was inspired by the immediate need for financial stringency following the First World War and was informed more broadly by orthodox doctrines of balanced budgets.²¹ The Ten-Year Rule was repeatedly mobilised by Treasury officials and Chancellors who pressed for 'drastic cuts' in defence estimates and successfully foiled attempts by the Service Departments to raid the Exchequer.²² Although spending on the armed forces declined by 30% in real terms between 1919 and 1932, the Ten-Year Rule was not especially controversial beyond the Service Departments.²³ Indeed, much of the later criticism emanated from those, including Hankey, Fisher, and Winston Churchill, who had been complicit in devising and implementing the principle.²⁴ In large part, the Ten-Year Rule was not controversial because it coincided with an era of peace; threats to British national and imperial security appeared to recede rather than gather during the 1920s. At the same time, public opinion strongly supported financial prudence in defence spending. Quite apart from economic uncertainty – from post-war spending cuts to the impact of the Great Depression – Britons thought differently of war after the horrors of mechanised trench warfare. There was a strong sense of both pacifism (an absolutist theory that participation in, and support for, war is never permissible) and 'pacific-ism' (the belief that war can be prevented and abolished, and that armaments can cause wars).²⁵

However, by 1930, a growing revolt against the Ten-Year Rule was brewing within Whitehall. It was encouraged – and largely initiated – by Hankey.²⁶ Recognising the significance of cooperation, Hankey approached Vansittart and the Service Departments, and they combined to agitate against the Ten-Year Rule, albeit with little effect.²⁷ Efforts to persuade ministers to confront the perilously low state of defence

²¹ TNA, WO/32/9314, Hankey to Speed, 14 December 1923.

²² TNA, T/161/292, S34216, Hopkins to Fisher and Chancellor, 20 November 1928 and Fisher minute, 21 November 1928.

²³ Catherine Krull and B.J.C. McKercher, 'The Press, Public Opinion, Arms Limitation, and Government Policy in Britain, 1932-34: Some Preliminary Observations', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 13:3 (2002), 103-136 (104).

²⁴ Compare, for instance, Fisher Papers, Fisher to Lloyd George, 3 September 1919, and Warren Fisher, 'The Beginnings of Civil Defence', *Public Administration*, 26 (1948), 211-216 (212). See also Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War. Volume I: The Gathering Storm* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948), 80; CAC, ROSK/7/78, Roskill to Robin, 13 November 1969.

²⁵ Martin Ceadel, *Thinking about Peace and War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 3-5; 105.

²⁶ TNA, CAB/53/2/6, COS(64), 23 January 1928; COS(65), 23 February 1928; CAB/53/2/9, COS(73), 6 July 1928.

²⁷ TNA, WO/32/3488, Hankey to Creedy, 5 February 1931; CAB/21/372, J.R. Charles to Hankey, 24 November 1930; CAB/63/43/108-112, 'Note of a Conversation with Sir Robert Vansittart', 21

preparedness fell on deaf ears.²⁸ It was the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in September 1931 which dramatically altered the situation.²⁹ The Chiefs of Staff Committee's 1932 annual review capitalised on the 'ominous' significance of the Manchurian crisis, which demonstrated the weaknesses of the League of Nations and threw into sharper relief the danger of a resurgent Japan to British imperial interests.³⁰ Vansittart heartily concurred that 'the ten years assumption is really no longer tenable'.³¹ The Treasury, however, continued to spurn any increase in defence spending, emphasising that Britain's security depended on financial stability, Treasury officials advised that 'at the present time financial risks are greater than any other that we can estimate'.³² Against the Treasury's recommendation, the Chiefs of Staff, Vansittart, and the Foreign Secretary successfully persuaded the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) to cancel the Ten-Year Rule at a crucial meeting in March 1932.³³ Mandarins' attempts to set the agenda were therefore largely frustrated until a major international crisis stirred ministers into tentative action. At the same time, it is unlikely that the Ten-Year Rule would have been cancelled in March 1932 if not for the urgent warnings from elite officials.

The abrogation of the Ten-Year Rule did not loosen the Treasury's purse strings.³⁴ Nor did it resolve which alternative principle should henceforth guide defence estimates, whether deficiencies should be ameliorated and, if so, in what order of priority and to what levels. Both Hankey and Vansittart watched the international situation closely. The threat of a militarist Germany seeking to revise the Treaty of Versailles loomed large in their minds. By 1933, they advised that Adolf Hitler was pursuing a duplicitous foreign policy and warned of the realities of the Nazi movement.³⁵ However, just as Hankey and Vansittart had struggled to find traction in their quest to cancel the Ten-Year Rule, they discovered that placing a discussion of defence deficiencies on the agenda was equally difficult. Ministers were distracted with other

November 1930; CAB/63/44/3-15, 'The Basis of Service Estimates', Hankey, 9 January 1931; CAB/63/44/16, Vansittart to Hankey, 22 January 1931.

²⁸ TNA, CAB/4/21, C.O.S.272, 'Annual Report', 16 June 1931; 1055B, 'Note by the Secretary', 23 June 1931; 1056B, 'Memorandum by the Foreign Office', 25 June 1931.

²⁹ Joe Maiolo, *Cry Havoc: The Arms Race and the Second World War, 1931-41* (London: John Murray, 2010), 95.

³⁰ TNA, CAB/4/21, 1082B, 'Annual Report', 28 February 1932.

³¹ TNA, CAB/21/368, Vansittart to Hankey, 20 February 1932.

³² TNA, CAB/4/21, 1087B, 'Note by the Treasury', 11 March 1932.

³³ TNA, CAB/2/5, 255th Meeting, 22 March 1932.

³⁴ For example, TNA, ADM/116/3434, Eyres-Monsell correspondence with Chamberlain, December 1932 – January 1933.

³⁵ CAC, VNST/1/1/8, 'Memorandum on the Present and Future Position in Europe', Vansittart, 20 August 1933; TNA, CAB/53/23/4, COS307, 'Memorandum by the Foreign Office', 19 May 1933; CAB/21/383, 'Hitler's External Policy', Hankey, 24 October 1933.

priorities and sought to avoid the distasteful and controversial subject of armaments. Concerned about public opinion as well as financial solvency following the Great Depression, ministers hoped that the Disarmament Conference at Geneva would restrain Britain's enemies from rearming. It was the darkening international situation which greatly assisted Hankey and Vansittart's cause. As Germany grew more bellicose, the League of Nations appeared frailer, and the Disarmament Conference faltered in September 1933, Hankey and Vansittart began to cooperate more closely and to voice their concerns with greater urgency.³⁶ Vansittart hosted Hankey and Warren Fisher at his opulent Park Street residence, where the talk turned to international crises and the trio discovered that they were of the same mind.³⁷ It was this informal lunchtime gathering which paved the way for professional collaboration on the issue. The little group co-authored a formidable memorandum.³⁸ This document contrasted the resurgent militarist spirit and superior standard of German military and industrial forces with the cumulative deficiencies within the British Service Departments. Moreover, they drew attention to the experience of 1914 and cleverly struck a raw nerve in politicians' minds in claiming that a better-prepared government might have averted war. In rejecting the view that armaments led to war and believing in the necessity of defensive wars, they thus subscribed to what might be termed 'defencism'.³⁹ The memorandum by Fisher, Hankey, and Vansittart was followed closely by the Chiefs of Staff Committee's annual review, which also pressed for deficiencies to be ameliorated by drawing attention to the gulf between British capabilities and commitments.⁴⁰

Hopes for disarmament were shattered in late October 1933 when Germany withdrew from the League and the Disarmament Conference, suggesting even to the pacific-ist Prime Minister and cautious Chancellor of the Exchequer that the future was 'ominous' and that 'common prudence would seem to indicate some strengthening of our defences'.⁴¹ Thus, as a crisis of confidence in the international order struck, the heads of the Cabinet Office, Treasury, Foreign Office, Admiralty, Air Ministry, and War Office united behind a common purpose and course of action. Ministers were more receptive to advice on ameliorating defence deficiencies at a meeting of the CID in early

³⁶ TNA, CAB/63/46, Memorandum, Hankey, 19 September 1933.

³⁷ TNA, CAB/63/61, Hankey's engagement diary, 29 Sept 1933.

³⁸ CAB/63/46/149-152, Memorandum, 4 October 1933.

³⁹ Ceadel, *Peace and War*, 5; 105.

⁴⁰ TNA, CAB/53/23/5, COS310, 'Annual Review', 12 October 1933.

⁴¹ TNA, PRO/30/69/1753/1, 15 October 1933; Neville Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 21 October 1933 in Robert Self (ed.), *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters, Volume 3. The Heir Apparent, 1928-1933* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 407-408.

November.⁴² The Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, agreed that the time had come to devise a programme and the DRC was formed to 'prepare and consider defence requirements as a whole'. In considering officials' ability to set the agenda, significant time passed between Hankey and Vansittart's activities at the start of the decade and the CID's decision to engage with the question of defence deficiencies in late 1933. It is fallacious to suggest that the creation of the DRC stemmed solely from mandarins' machinations. Agenda-setting is difficult, yet the Whitehall elite succeeded because their consensus bred confidence in their recommendation and, equally as important, international developments added credence to their views.

The Defence Requirements Committee

The DRC comprised the Chiefs of Staff and Fisher, Hankey, and Vansittart. The Chiefs of Staff and civil servants were well-known to one another. Ernle Chatfield, First Sea Lord, was particularly close to Hankey and well respected. In contrast, Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) was timid and inactive. Yet it was Edward Ellington, Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) who, lacking a basic grasp of the issues and figures, most infuriated his colleagues.⁴³ As the most senior civilian – having held the GCB for longer than Vansittart – Hankey was nominated as the committee's chairman.⁴⁴ Fisher had been added to the DRC at the Chancellor of the Exchequer's wish and the Permanent Secretary took pains to stress that he served not 'as Secretary to the Treasury but as an Englishman' and that his priority was not 'money costs' but 'the insurance of our country'.⁴⁵ His attempts to reassure the Service chiefs reflected a genuine desire to resolve defence issues and, perhaps more cynically, the knowledge that a thorough financial review would be conducted later in the inquiry to assess the feasibility of the DRC's recommendations. Couching membership of the DRC in the language of a brotherhood, Fisher urged his colleagues to think of themselves not as 'individuals fighting their respective corners', but instead 'a team engaged in

⁴² TNA, CAB/2/6, 261st Meeting, 9 November 1933; 9 November 1933 in Brian Bond (ed.), *Chief of Staff: The Diaries of Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Pownall. Volume I, 1933-1940* (London: Leo Cooper, 1972), 23-24.

⁴³ Maiolo, *Cry Havoc*, 97; TNA, T/172/1830, Fergusson to Chamberlain, 27 April 1935.

⁴⁴ TNA, CAB/21/434, Fisher to Chatfield, 10 November 1933.

⁴⁵ TNA, CAB/21/434, Fisher to Hankey, 26 January 1934; CAB/16/109, DRC/1, 14 November 1933.

presenting to the Government the best solution'.⁴⁶ Committee members understood that they might be able to influence government policy if they presented united and unanimous recommendations and controlled the flow of information reaching more powerful actors. Nevertheless, such idealistic hopes of cooperation and compromise were immediately strained by conflict and competition. Members were a 'team of rivals' who constructed shifting alliances and leveraged resources against each other in attempts to steer the outcome of deliberations, while never losing sight of their shared interests.⁴⁷ The ultimate goal – a belief in the fallacy of diplomacy without strength, and thus the need to ameliorate defence deficiencies to avoid war – was a powerful binding force. Competition over details was therefore constrained within the bounds of cooperation towards shared interests. In this way, 'competitive cooperation' was a more accurate description of the DRC than Fisher's ideal.

Tensions quickly appeared when the committee attempted to determine defence priorities. The Chiefs of Staff and the CID had prioritised the situation in the Far East as the greatest threatened, followed by the German menace. Both Hankey and Chatfield subscribed to this widely held view.⁴⁸ However, members of the DRC disagreed with this assumption. Disagreements were rooted in differences over the degrees and the imminence of the threats, rather than fundamentally different perceptions of the international situation. Fisher strongly opposed prioritising the Far East over Europe and made no secret of his views from the first meeting of the committee.⁴⁹ Hankey, however, sought to obstruct Fisher by postponing discussion on the international situation until Vansittart – currently on leave – was present. Yet Vansittart was a disappointment. When the DRC reconvened, Vansittart made clear that he, too, wished to prioritise the European danger above that in the Far East.⁵⁰ Speaking with great lucidity, Vansittart's warnings were amplified by his status as the committee's expert on foreign affairs, and his ability to draw on Foreign Office despatches. Vansittart drew on balance of power theories to link the dual threat and claim that Japan would only attack if Britain was mired in difficulties 'elsewhere'; 'elsewhere' must therefore be the priority.⁵¹ Hankey challenged Vansittart's assessment of the situation but, recognising

⁴⁶ TNA, CAB/21/434, Fisher to Chatfield, 10 November 1933.

⁴⁷ Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*.

⁴⁸ Brian Bond, *Military Policy between the Two World Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 195-6; Neilson, 'Defence Requirements', 662-665.

⁴⁹ TNA, CAB/16/109, DRC2, 'Extracts from Lord Milne's Memorandum', 10 November 1933 (circulated at Fisher's request); DRC/1, 14 November 1933.

⁵⁰ TNA, CAB/16/109, DRC/3, 4 December 1933.

⁵¹ Charles Morrissey and M.A. Ramsay, "Giving a lead in the right direction": Sir Robert Vansittart and the Defence Requirements Sub-Committee', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 6:1 (1995), 39-60 (45-

the strength of Vansittart's position, sought a tactful compromise to bracket the European and Far East menaces as equal. Vansittart firmly opposed any compromise and turned to Fisher for support.

The matter of priorities was the first and most consequential issue on which Vansittart and Fisher collaborated during the DRC. Throughout the 1930s, Fisher grew increasingly hostile to Germany; he believed Nazism and 'Hitlerism' to be a destructive form of 'Prussianism' and an anti-Christian 'creed of the devil'.⁵² He strongly believed that Britain could never fight both Germany and Japan simultaneously, and thus England was 'the heart, the vital spot' of defence.⁵³ Fisher therefore enthusiastically supported Vansittart's effort to prioritise Germany as the greatest threat. He aped Vansittart's language of the balance of power and bombarded the committee with memoranda to control both the content and volume of information reaching his colleagues.⁵⁴ In the most consequential of these, Fisher emphasised that Germany was 'the ultimate potential enemy against whom our "long view" defence policy' should be directed.⁵⁵ He stressed the importance of deterring Germany by demonstrating that 'they will come up against our maximum strength, undivided and undistracted by Far Eastern complications'.⁵⁶ Vansittart agreed. He rationalised also that in opposing German ambitions, Britain could deter other nations from allying with Germany.⁵⁷ While it was sometimes thought that Vansittart was 'violently anti-German', this was not true.⁵⁸ His reading of the international situation – informed by his secret sources of intelligence – made him wary of German intentions and the threat posed by militarism.⁵⁹ Vansittart lobbied the DRC and especially Hankey. He shared secret information from Foreign Office despatches which lent credence to the view that 'the Japanese danger ... [was] No. 2 and not No. 1'.⁶⁰ He thus controlled privileged intelligence and could decide whether to share, and if so, select what to share, to leverage this resource over his colleagues. It was not that Hankey denied the German menace; it was over the imminence of the

46); Simon Bourette-Knowles, 'The Global Micawber: Sir Robert Vansittart, the Treasury and the Global Balance of Power, 1933-35', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 6:1 (1995), 91-121.

⁵² TNA, CAB/21/540, Fisher to Vansittart, 23 May 1935; Fisher to Hankey, 24 May 1935; Fisher Papers, Fisher to Chamberlain, 3 January 1939; Warren Fisher, 'Facing the Facts', *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 758:127 (1940), 507-512.

⁵³ Fisher Papers, Fisher to Chancellor, 15 February 1938.

⁵⁴ TNA, T/161/624, Fisher to Chancellor, 12 January 1934.

⁵⁵ TNA, CAB/16/109, DRC9, 'Note by Sir Warren Fisher', 12 January 1934.

⁵⁶ TNA, CAB/16/109, DRC12, Memorandum by Fisher, 29 January 1934.

⁵⁷ CAC, VNST/1/2/22, Vansittart minute, 10 February 1934.

⁵⁸ CAC, PHPP/1/2/17, Vansittart to Phipps, 5 March 1935.

⁵⁹ TNA, CAB/21/540, Vansittart to Hankey, 22 and 27 May 1935.

⁶⁰ TNA, CAB/21/387, Vansittart to Hankey, 3 January 1934.

threats from Japan and Germany that the three civilians disagreed.⁶¹ Fisher and Vansittart eventually triumphed in the battle over priorities. The DRC report prioritised Germany as 'the ultimate potential enemy'. Vansittart had effectively dominated the discussion; he leveraged his greater understanding of the international system, his skills of argument, his access to information, and his status as an expert. He was also supported by a committed ally who amplified his arguments and, in refusing to accept the compromise of ranking Germany and Japan as equal threats, Vansittart forced his colleagues to concede to preserve the unity of the committee.

In devising the detailed programme to ameliorate defence deficiencies, mandarins demonstrated keen political antennae. They agreed to recommend a programme which would 'shock' politicians and the public with 'strident' claims and thus encourage ministers to recognise the gravity of the threat.⁶² Yet they were aware of the practical financial and industrial limitations. Importing raw materials would destabilise the balance of payments and necessitate the curtailing of other imports; large increases in industrial production would also require interventionist 'emergency' measures. Similarly, vast expenditure on armaments would destabilise the fragile economy as the electorate would accept neither higher taxes nor a defence loan; high spending would therefore destroy one of the key pillars of a 'warfare state'.⁶³ However, Fisher was adamant that the committee should not 'whittle down what they considered to be necessary; as their estimates might quite likely be whittled down by Ministers'.⁶⁴ Entirely dishonestly, Fisher vowed to use his position within the Treasury to obstruct ministers' attempts to prune the programme.⁶⁵

The civilians were often better advocates for the Service Departments than the Chiefs of Staff. It has sometimes been attributed to the psychological effect of years of retrenchment within the armed services, as well as the fear that excessive demands might endanger the whole project.⁶⁶ Yet this does not account for Chatfield's contrasting ambition; a more accurate explanation is the lack of leadership and imagination in the

⁶¹ All three acknowledged the congruence of their thinking the following year, TNA, CAB/21/540, triangular correspondence, May 1935.

⁶² Morrisey and Ramsay, 'Defence Requirements Sub-Committee', 53-54.

⁶³ See David Edgerton, *Warfare State: Britain, 1920-1970* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), especially the introduction through to chapter four. Edgerton posits that Britain was a warfare state, as much as a welfare state, even beyond the middle of the twentieth century.

⁶⁴ TNA, CAB/16/109, DRC/5, 19 January 1934

⁶⁵ TNA, CAB/16/109, DRC/7, 25 January 1934.

⁶⁶ Bond, *Military Policy*, 196-7.

Air Ministry and War Office.⁶⁷ Chatfield sought to secure Britain's sea power and nowhere was this more important than in the Far East. He demanded a very expensive programme of warship building, a larger fleet, global naval bases, and stocks of ammunition and fuel. This ambitious plan aimed to bring the Fleet to a standard where it would be 'reasonably ready for war' within five years.⁶⁸ Fisher was increasingly conciliatory towards naval demands in early 1934 and used his personal friendship with Chatfield to improve strained relations between the Treasury and Admiralty, with mixed success.⁶⁹ Hankey advocated for Chatfield's proposed programme and the committee readily accepted the need to expedite the completion of the Singapore base and ameliorate some of the worst deficiencies. However, the costly and controversial shipbuilding programme to realise a two-power naval standard was delayed until after the results of the forthcoming Naval Conference were known.⁷⁰ Hankey and Chatfield's difficulties in securing the entire naval programme stemmed in large part from the sheer cost of the requirements, as well as having lost the battle to assign the Far East as the highest priority threat.

When Montgomery-Massingberd proposed a vague and uninspiring programme, it fell to the civilians to press the Army's case.⁷¹ The true cost of bringing the Territorial Army (TA) to full strength and equipping the Expeditionary Force was prohibitive at £145 million.⁷² Yet the CIGS requested a meagre £250,000 for the TA.⁷³ He claimed that a greater sum could not be spent, and nor would greater expenditure scratch the surface of the true cost. Montgomery-Massingberd added that he wished to await the War Office's review into the utilisation of the TA in a future war before 'pouring money on them'.⁷⁴ Despite the civilians' combined attempts to alter the CIGS's attitude, they were unsuccessful. Impervious to persuasion, Montgomery-Massingberd refused to submit a more comprehensive programme for consideration by the DRC. As the onus rested on the Chiefs of Staff and not the civilians to state the needs of their respective Services, officials could do very little. They struggled because they were resource-poor compared to the Chiefs of Staff, who possessed status, as well as expertise

⁶⁷ 23 January 1934 in Bond (ed.), *Pownall Diary. Volume I*, 34.

⁶⁸ 18 January 1934 in Bond (ed.), *Pownall Diary. Volume I*, 34; TNA, CAB/16/109, DRC/5, 19 January 1934.

⁶⁹ TNA, T/161/624, 'Naval Programme 1934', Fisher minute, 8 January 1934, and Fisher to Chamberlain, 3 February 1934; CAB/21/384, Eyres-Monsell to Hankey, 28 February 1934.

⁷⁰ TNA, CAB/24/247, CP64 (34), DRC Report, 28 February 1934.

⁷¹ TNA, CAB/16/109, Memorandum, Montgomery-Massingberd, 9 January 1934.

⁷² 18 December 1933 in Bond (ed.), *Pownall Diary. Volume I*, 29. Adjusted for inflation, this sum would be worth approximately £10.6 billion in 2020.

⁷³ Adjusted for inflation, approximately £18 million in 2020.

⁷⁴ TNA, CAB/16/109, DRC/12, 26 February 1934.

in the requirements of the Services. Fisher, Hankey, and Vansittart could only tinker at the margins of the Army's requests. All three felt that the Army should be allotted the lowest priority of the three Services and debated the merits of a continental commitment in a future war. Yet they made a very strong case for funding the Army in the DRC report, particularly if the European situation deteriorated further.⁷⁵

The Air Ministry's modest proposals were equally controversial. The plan aimed to bring the Home Defence Force to a total of 52 squadrons – a level devised, but never reached, in 1923. The Air Ministry recognised that while 'we shall be very much shot at ... for not pressing for a much greater strengthening of the Royal Air Force ... the path of political wisdom clearly lies in ... very moderate measures'.⁷⁶ Fisher, Hankey, and Vansittart were dissatisfied with Ellington's proposal.⁷⁷ Only Montgomery-Massingberd supported Ellington, although this was predicated entirely on self-interest; Montgomery-Massingberd recognised that to allot higher spending to the RAF would necessitate cuts in the Army and Navy programmes. Fears of indiscriminate civilian bombing were widespread across Whitehall and within the DRC.⁷⁸ Fisher, Hankey, and Vansittart agreed that as taxpayers would be most easily convinced the 'put up money' for air defences, they encouraged Ellington to raise his ambitions.⁷⁹ Like Montgomery-Massingberd, Ellington refused, claiming that 'emergency measures' would be needed for rapid expansion.⁸⁰ Vansittart, who firmly believed in the importance of air power in a future war and who was acutely concerned that Germany's air strength would increase dramatically based on his secret sources of intelligence, disagreed. He advocated that 52 squadrons were insufficient and urged that a further 25 were necessary. Vansittart knew that if the DRC fragmented, all hopes of remedying any deficiencies would falter; he sought to leverage his colleagues' desire for a unanimous report into influence by threatening that he would have 'the greatest difficulty in signing the report'.⁸¹ When Ellington refused to cede ground, Hankey attempted to resolve the dispute diplomatically with a compromise. It was Vansittart and Fisher who negotiated the compromise that the report would draw attention to mounting evidence of German air

⁷⁵ TNA, CAB/24/247, CP64 (34), DRC Report, 28 February 1934.

⁷⁶ CRL, AP/14/1/149, Bullock to Eden, 2 November 1933; TNA, AIR/8/171, correspondence January 1934.

⁷⁷ TNA, CAB/16/109, DRC/1, 14 November 1933; DRC/8, 30 January 1934.

⁷⁸ This is explored in greater depth in chapter five.

⁷⁹ TNA, CAB/16/109, DRC/9, 30 January 1934; DRC/10, 16 February 1934; DRC/11, 19 February 1934.

⁸⁰ Including recruitment, training, barracking, and airfield and aircraft construction.

⁸¹ TNA, CAB/16/109, DRC/12, 26 February 1934.

rearmament to make the danger clear to ministers and make plain that the Air Ministry's programme did not provide sufficient defence.

Employing similar methods to Vansittart, Chatfield then refused to sign the amended report which had been discussed and agreed during his absence from the meeting.⁸² The threat to fracture unity was a key implement in members' toolkits and ultimately a form of brinkmanship which gambled that colleagues would prioritise unity ahead of their own preferences. Hankey tried to persuade his friend to accept the compromise.⁸³ Following a series of frantic telephone calls between Hankey, Chatfield, and Vansittart to renegotiate the shape of the final report, the committee agreed to revert to the original text; Vansittart was thus forced to cede a significant amount of ground and dilute the strident objections to the Air Ministry's programme. Hankey's calm and diplomatic chairmanship kept the ship afloat by appealing for accommodation and unity. Though modesty was never one of Hankey's strengths, he later described himself, quite accurately, as a 'professional peace-maker'.⁸⁴ The dispute over the air programme stemmed from differences in perception. The DRC had been formally tasked with focusing on the 'worst deficiencies' rather than recommending what constituted sufficient levels of defence. Members clashed over whether achieving the 52-squadron standard would remedy the 'worst deficiencies'. The report ultimately endorsed the 52-squadron standard and drew attention to the importance of the proposal for an addition 25 squadrons if Germany pursued rapid air rearmament.⁸⁵ In a recurrent theme, civilians once more compromised to a greater degree than the Chiefs of Staff over the details of the programme.

Hankey and Vansittart's skills in conciliation and compromise were tested once more when the issue of Anglo-American relations threatened to derail the DRC report in the closing stages of deliberations. The dispute centred on how Britain might realise idealistic notions of better Anglo-Japanese relations to pacify the Far East threat. Fisher wished to 'emancipate ourselves from thralldom to the USA ... and thus free ourselves to establish durable relations with Japan'.⁸⁶ In a clear demonstration of shifting alliances, the Fisher-Vansittart axis fractured over this issue. Vansittart now allied with Hankey;

⁸² 27 February 1934 in Bond (ed.), *Pownall Diary. Volume I*, 37.

⁸³ TNA, CAB/21/434, Hankey to Chatfield, 27 February 1934.

⁸⁴ CRL, AP/8/2/99, Hankey to Eden, 21 February 1938.

⁸⁵ TNA, CAB/24/247, CP64 (34), DRC Report, 28 February 1934.

⁸⁶ TNA, CAB/16/109, DRC12, Memorandum, Fisher, 29 January 1934.

both thought it 'rather mad' to abandon America 'in order to run after the Japanese'.⁸⁷ Both were pragmatists rather than Americanophiles, and Vansittart even privately considered Americans to be 'somewhat difficult people to work with'.⁸⁸ As demonstrated in the third chapter, Hankey believed that there was influence to be found in drafting. Hoping to influence the shape of the document to compensate for his difficulties in asserting his views in meetings, Hankey took sole responsibility for drafting the DRC report.⁸⁹ Yet he found his path obstructed when his colleagues were neither uninterested in the report, nor passive in scrutinising its content. Fisher protested that his views on Anglo-American relations had been ignored and proposed an addendum to discuss the significance he attached to abandoning the policy of 'subservience' to the USA.⁹⁰ In pleading his case to the Chairman, Fisher played on their long association and asked whether during 'our many years of intimate and indeed affectionate relations, have you found me specially unreasonable or irresponsible or self-opinionated?'⁹¹ Emulating his colleagues' tactics, Fisher refused to sign the report in its current form.

It fell to Hankey to preserve the unity of the committee by means of the carrot and the stick. He denied that Fisher had ever been 'unreasonable or unresponsive or self-opinionated'.⁹² At the same time, Hankey warned Fisher that as Vansittart's memorandum to the Cabinet had stressed the importance of friendly Anglo-American relations, any contradiction in the DRC report would invite criticism from ministers; moreover, should Fisher create difficulties over the matter, he might delay and imperil the whole endeavour. Hankey also struck down Fisher's threat to bring Ramsay MacDonald into the dispute by warning that it would be 'bad tactics' to pursue the issue with the Prime Minister, who 'has a very warm spot for the Americans'. Despite Hankey's efforts – and his promise to consider how to accommodate Fisher's request – the Permanent Secretary was unmoved. He was equally resolute when all members of the DRC rejected the proposed addendum.⁹³ Desperate to preserve unity, Hankey and Vansittart proposed to compromise by adding a short reference to Anglo-American

⁸⁷ 15 February 1934 in Bond (ed.), *Pownall Diary. Volume I*, 36; TNA, CAB/16/109, DRC/3, 4 December 1933.

⁸⁸ 10 May 1934 in W.P. Crozier, *Off the Record: Political Interviews, 1933-1943*. Edited with an Introduction by A.J.P. Taylor (London: Hutchinson, 1973), 21-23.

⁸⁹ TNA, PREM/1/153, Hankey to PM, 2 February 1934; 18 January 1934 in Bond (ed.), *Pownall Diary. Volume I*, 34.

⁹⁰ TNA, CAB/16/109, DRC16, Fisher to Hankey, 12 February 1934; CAB/16/109, DRC19, 'Note by Sir Warren Fisher', 17 February 1934.

⁹¹ TNA, CAB/21/434, Fisher to Hankey, 17 February 1934.

⁹² TNA, CAB/21/434, Hankey to Fisher, 17 February 1934.

⁹³ TNA, CAB/16/109, DRC/11, 19 February 1934.

relations in the report. Hankey and Fisher quarrelled later that afternoon over the wording of the passage. Flirting with the idea of drawing on the authority of a more powerful actor to pacify his opponent, Hankey considered reporting Fisher to MacDonald who, 'being strongly American, is not likely to side with Fisher'.⁹⁴ That Hankey hesitated to do so reveals his reluctance to reveal the extent of divisions within the committee to a Prime Minister who was already wary of any hint of rearmament.

Rejecting coercion for consensus-building, Hankey sought to 'bring us all together' because he recognised the value of collective influence and the importance of leveraging a façade of unity into influence.⁹⁵ Hankey preyed on Fisher's conscience, reminding him that if he did not comply, the Permanent Secretary would bear responsibility for the collapse of the DRC and any consequences which stemmed from the lost opportunity to ameliorate defence deficiencies. He also mirrored Fisher's previous appeal to their friendship, knowing that his hyperemotional colleague would feel it keenly. Hankey pleaded Fisher 'in view of our long and intimate association, to make a great effort of conciliation'. Fisher's opposition crumbled immediately. He admitted that there could only be 'one response to such an appeal coming from so dear a friend and colleague ... there is nothing grudging in the "yes" which I give to you'. Later that same afternoon, the Secretary to the DRC recollected how Hankey and Fisher were 'crying gently on each other's necks that two such old friends should quarrel'.⁹⁶ It is unlikely that Hankey, who despised displays of emotion in his professional life and did not even shed a tear at his brother's death, cried.⁹⁷ Yet Fisher's emotional personality left him susceptible to such personal appeals. That Hankey brokered compromise through reference to personal sentiments speaks to the significance of informal relations between the civilians. However, Fisher nevertheless successfully secured the inclusion of a brief passage which acknowledged the impact of 'subservience to ... America ... in the deterioration of ... relations with Japan'.⁹⁸ Indeed, Fisher displayed a striking propensity for getting his own way throughout the inquiry.

A further controversy almost derailed the DRC project. After signing the report on 28 February 1934, Ellington confided to the Secretary that the Air Ministry now recognised that all the squadrons recommended within the report would be required for home defence and thus there would be none available for reconnaissance or the Fleet

⁹⁴ 19 February 1934 in Bond (ed.), *Pownall Diary. Volume I*, 36.

⁹⁵ TNA, CAB/21/434, Hankey to Fisher, 20 February 1934.

⁹⁶ TNA, CAB/63/62; 20 February 1934 in Bond (ed.), *Pownall Diary. Volume I*, 36.

⁹⁷ CAC, ROSK/7/90, 'Burgis on Hankey, 1967'.

⁹⁸ TNA, CAB/24/247, CP64 (34), D.R.C. Report, 28 February 1934.

Air Arm.⁹⁹ Ellington subsequently admitted this to his DRC colleagues and reignited the controversy over air power just as the report was to be circulated.¹⁰⁰ Hankey castigated Ellington for having brushed aside the civilians' demands for a more ambitious programme; yet for fear of fracturing the unity of the committee, Hankey was willing to let the matter rest.¹⁰¹ Vansittart, however, exploded. He believed in the 'imminence' of the German threat to a great extent than Hankey and was more willing to prioritise the detail of the report over unity in the heat of the moment.¹⁰² Vansittart immediately withdrew his signature from the report and asked Hankey to call a meeting of the DRC to discuss the matter.¹⁰³ Hankey, who had only just secured unanimous approval for the report, refused. He rang Vansittart and 'brought him round to sense' by reminding the Permanent Under-Secretary that there would be later opportunities to alter the air programme.¹⁰⁴ Hankey's personal and conciliatory appeal succeeded, and Vansittart agreed to prioritise unity.

The report was sent to MacDonald and Stanley Baldwin (Lord President of the Council) on 1 March and thereafter circulated to the Cabinet. Yet even after the report had been circulated, the question of air power weighed heavily on Vansittart's mind. He wrote again to Hankey, attacking Ellington's ignorance and lack of courage in failing to support Vansittart's more ambitious air power proposals.¹⁰⁵ He reminded the Chairman that in recommending a costly programme which offered inadequate defences, the report was offering the 'worst of both worlds'. Expressing his deep disquiet, Vansittart asked Hankey to place his letter of protest on record. Hankey resisted the request.¹⁰⁶ Taking a carrot and stick approach once more, Hankey emphasised that the consequences of such a move would provoke Fisher to make claims of his own; at the same time, he reassured Vansittart that the DRC brotherhood would be 'keeping a sharp lookout' as the international situation developed and would raise the matter directly with the Cabinet if further information regarding German rearmament came to light. Vansittart was most moved by Hankey's personal appeal not to make trouble and conceded that if his friend considered the circulation of Vansittart's letter to be 'embarrassing', he would not press the matter.¹⁰⁷ The eleventh-hour quarrel over air

⁹⁹ 28 February 1934 in Bond (ed.), *Pownall Diary. Volume I*, 37-8.

¹⁰⁰ CAB/16/109, DRC21, 'Note by the Secretary', 28 February 1934.

¹⁰¹ TNA, CAB/21/434, Hankey to Ellington, 28 February 1934.

¹⁰² TNA, CAB/21/434, Hankey to Vansittart, 6 March 1934; CAB/21/387, correspondence 1-3 March 1934.

¹⁰³ TNA, CAB/21/434, 'Message from R. Vansittart', 1 March 1934.

¹⁰⁴ 28 February 1934 in Bond (ed.), *Pownall Diary. Volume I*, 37-38.

¹⁰⁵ TNA, CAB/21/434, Vansittart to Hankey, 2 March 1934.

¹⁰⁶ TNA, CAB/21/434, Hankey to Vansittart, 5 March 1934.

¹⁰⁷ TNA, CAB/21/434, Vansittart to Hankey, 6 March 1934.

power further demonstrates the willingness of mandarins to subordinate their individual preferences on the detail of the report to the wider impulse of unity to leverage influence. It also speaks to the importance of collegiality and compromise in managing collective influence. Nevertheless, Vansittart later bitterly regretted the concession which he believed had fundamentally weakened the DRC's efforts.¹⁰⁸

Studying the DRC reveals the ways in which elite mandarins manoeuvred for advantage over each other and the Chiefs of Staff in the hope of stamping the report with their preferences. Officials did not possess hard power, understood as the ability to command and coerce others. Instead, they attempted to wield soft power: this is co-optive and refers to the ability to persuade and shape the preferences of others to control minds and actions.¹⁰⁹ Officials employed a range of tactics, and some were more successful than others. They constructed shifting alliances – marriages of convenience – where they agreed to combine their resources. They sought to control the flows of information within the DRC, including by means of circulating private or privileged sources of intelligence. They stressed their own expertise to add credence to their views, while at the same time underscoring their opponent's lack of expertise. They leveraged personal relationships to either deter or encourage colleagues to act in particular ways. Moreover, they recognised the importance of unity in the goal of collective influence and cynically marshalled the threat of disunity into a resource to force colleagues to abandon their personal preferences. However, despite deploying a range of tactics to influence colleagues, the civilian members of the DRC repeatedly conceded and found accommodation with each other and the Chiefs of Staff rather than break from the committee. This required diplomatic skills of conciliation and compromise.

Like a centripetal force, the ties binding members of the DRC were stronger than the forces pulling and pushing them apart. Fisher, Hankey, and Vansittart were friends. They were often allies, sometimes opponents – but never enemies – and always equals. They competed and collaborated with each other in turn. Even during moments of strain and discord, there was a strong element of collegiality to proceedings which cannot be understood without reference to the personal relationships between the trio. Notions of 'competitive cooperation' and a 'team of rivals' thus accurately capture the workings of

¹⁰⁸ TNA, FO/371/17695, C4297/20/18, Vansittart minute, 5 July 1934; Vansittart, *Mist Procession*, 443.

¹⁰⁹ Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. Revised by Kenneth Thompson (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 30; Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 25-32; Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 1-9.

the group. Elite mandarins ultimately prioritised the wider goal of ameliorating the worst deficiencies – which they believed would only be achieved through unity – rather than quarrelling over the detail of the programme at this stage. This in turn demonstrates that officials were acutely aware of the limitations of their individual influence in the vast expanse of Whitehall. It arguably also reflected a wily willingness to play a longer game. Mandarins looked to the horizon and knew that they could cede ground during the DRC because ministerial deliberations would offer more opportunities to influence policy change. Neither Fisher, Hankey, nor Vansittart were satisfied with the DRC report. However, Fisher and Vansittart had secured more of their preferences than had Hankey. The Cabinet Secretary disagreed with the recommended air and army programmes and opposed both the prioritisation of the German threat and the resulting demotion of naval power. While the three civilians were equals in the DRC's balance of power, the power dynamic between the triumvirate changed dramatically during the next stage of the inquiry.

Finally, one of the most curious aspects of the DRC concerns its psychology. The classic model of group conformity was posited by Irving Janis.¹¹⁰ He described the 'psychological contagion' produced when group cohesiveness creates conformity pressures. Cohesiveness is driven by members valuing the group, expressing solidarity with each other, and sharing warm relationships. In Janis's conception of group dynamics, cohesiveness and pressures to conform can lead to a deterioration in the quality of decision-making. For example, a member expressing doubts as to the trend of thinking might be bombarded by the group to conform, either by revising ideas or toning down dissent; should this fail, said member might subsequently be isolated from the groups and further steps taken to counteract the influence of those who disrupt the group's norms. Ultimately, 'striving for unanimity overrides their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action'. That the DRC did not descend into an example of 'groupthink', despite displaying so many conditions outlined by Janis is highly intriguing.

Shared assumptions underpinned the committee's deliberations, chief amongst these that defence deficiencies must be ameliorated, and that successful diplomacy required strength. Members used personal appeals for unity and brokered shifting alliances to counter disruptive influences. There were also strong personal and

¹¹⁰ Irving L. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign-Policy Decisions and Fiascoes* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), especially iii-vi; 3-12.

professional relations between members, as well as the shared knowledge that a unanimous recommendation would carry the most weight in the collective influence endeavour. Indeed, the DRC appeared as an exercise in ‘groupthink’ to those outside the bubble. However, members tested assumptions, introduced new information to the group, and probed different angles of the inquiry. They continued to voice opposition and to doubt the trend of consensus – and were comfortable doing so. That the DRC was not enthralled by the lure of ‘groupthink’ might be explained by several factors. The desire for unity was artificial and necessitated by the processes of decision-making within Whitehall rather than a genuine desire to reach a consensus to retain the group’s approval. Furthermore, each mandarin possessed immense access to information beyond that circulated to the committee. No one individual could dominate the flow of information to steer the trend of opinion and new ideas were thus continually injected into proceedings. In addition, personality mattered a great deal. Each of the civilians was active, and not passive: they desired to establish the norms of thinking. They were tenacious and unwilling to concede that their colleagues might be correct. This in turn reflects the intellectual diversity and individuality which separated Fisher, Hankey, and Vansittart. Drawn from different backgrounds and experiences, they had been conditioned by different information and departmental priorities. To conceive of this in Bourdieuan terms, they inhabited different fields and habitus, and could not be divorced from these influences.¹¹¹ While the trio shared much in common, they were comfortable with a degree of independence and individuality. They could cooperate without conforming on policy questions.

The Ministerial Inquiry

Some historians have been too hasty to assert that the DRC report ‘signalled a fundamental change in British defence policy’; it did nothing of the sort.¹¹² It merely contained recommendations as to the principle which should henceforth guide defence spending. It was not policy. It remained for ministers to debate and scrutinise the proposals and to decide whether to accept or reject the recommendations. Following a

¹¹¹ Pierre Bourdieu, ‘The Forms of Capital’, in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by John Richardson (Westport: Greenwood, 1986), 241-258; Peter Jackson, ‘Pierre Bourdieu, the ‘Cultural Turn’ and the Practice of International History’, *Review of International Studies*, 34 (2008), 155-181.

¹¹² For example, Gaines, *Dilemmas*, 32.

long struggle, elite mandarins had succeeded in placing defence deficiencies on the agenda and in returning a unanimous report for ministerial scrutiny. The third and most important phase of constructive influence centred on ministerial deliberations. The DRC report was considered by the Cabinet and the Ministerial Committee on Disarmament (abbreviated within Whitehall to the DCM). Derivative influence became more important than collective influence during this stage. Mandarins sought to harness their resources 'to obtain, commit and manipulate ... the power of other, more powerful [actors] ... in their own interests'.¹¹³ Relationships between officials and ministers were thus crucial in understanding how influence operated during this phase of the inquiry.

Relations were resources, and Fisher, Hankey, and Vansittart enjoyed good relations with the predominant politicians of the day. The three mandarins were close to MacDonald, with whom they shared professional respect and genuine friendship.¹¹⁴ Hankey was almost always at the Prime Minister's side as confidant and companion, either in Downing Street, at Chequers, or Lossiemouth.¹¹⁵ Although they sometimes disagreed on policy questions, there was mutual admiration and warmth in the relationship.¹¹⁶ Vansittart and MacDonald were similarly close and 'fond' of one another.¹¹⁷ Vansittart threw parties and dinners for MacDonald, which were opportunities to relax together, or to gossip on the diplomatic questions of the day.¹¹⁸ There could be strains in the relationship: while MacDonald remained close to the Permanent Under-Secretary, he was increasingly wary of Vansittart's impulsive personality and became distrustful of Vansittart's advice on foreign policy matters.¹¹⁹ Similarly, Baldwin enjoyed good relations with the triumvirate. He had grown close to Fisher while at the Treasury and the two regularly dined together and spent weekends at Baldwin's home. Although Fisher believed him to be lazy, he served Baldwin as a key advisor during the interwar period.¹²⁰ Vansittart was also a member of Baldwin's inner circle. There were inevitable disagreements over foreign affairs, yet their shared time at No. 10 Downing Street bound them as intimate friends.¹²¹ In contrast, Hankey was not

¹¹³ Michael Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (London: Frank Cass, 1981), 257-8.

¹¹⁴ TNA, PRO/30/69/1442, MacDonald to Fisher, 12 February 1932.

¹¹⁵ CAC, HNKY/1/7, 3 October 1932; HNKY/4/26, Ishbel MacDonald to Lady Hankey, 7 February 1934.

¹¹⁶ TNA, PRO/30/69/680, MacDonald to Hankey, 6 October 1934.

¹¹⁷ TNA, PRO/30/69/1447, Vansittart to MacDonald, 29 May 1937.

¹¹⁸ TNA, PRO/30/69/753, Vansittart to MacDonald, 29 December 1930; PRO/30/69/1753, 9 January 1934 and 7 April 1935.

¹¹⁹ TNA, PRO/30/69/6, Vansittart to MacDonald, 2 January 1934; PRO/30/69/679, August 1933 correspondence.

¹²⁰ O'Halpin, *Head of the Civil Service*, 111; Keith Middlemas and John Barnes, *Baldwin: A Biography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 76; 177.

¹²¹ Vansittart, *Mist Procession*, 138-9; 347-358.

as close to Baldwin as to the other interwar Prime Ministers; their association was merely professional.¹²²

Relationships with departmental ministers were also important. The Foreign Secretary, John Simon, was a difficult man with few friends in Whitehall. Simon, perceived as 'backboneless' and indecisive, profoundly 'depressed' his colleagues.¹²³ Although Vansittart appreciated Simon's efforts to defend the Foreign Office's views in Cabinet, he found Simon to be weak and duplicitous.¹²⁴ Nonetheless, the most important departmental minister was Neville Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer. To a considerable extent, Hankey was remote from Chamberlain on a professional and ideological level in 1934, and their warm relationship only developed from 1937 when Chamberlain acceded to the political throne. Similarly, Vansittart's relationship with Chamberlain was professional only. Although the seedlings of his later disagreements with Chamberlain were already apparent, they cooperated amicably on disarmament schemes in the early 1930s.¹²⁵ It was thus Fisher who monopolised the attention of, and access to, the most significant political actor. Their warm and affectionate association dated from Chamberlain's first period as Chancellor in 1923 and developed further when he returned to the Treasury in 1931. Fisher's letters became saccharine and dripped with 'fond love'.¹²⁶ Chamberlain valued Fisher as a source of support, encouragement, and advice, and respected his Permanent Secretary's judgement.¹²⁷ Chamberlain was a strong Chancellor and on excellent terms with his Treasury officials. To him fell the task of rebuilding Britain's economy. His guiding principle was orthodoxy and this fiscal conservatism gradually, though successfully, restored confidence and financial solvency. Chamberlain regarded financial policy as his exclusive domain, although he eagerly intruded in foreign policy.¹²⁸ His ability to interfere was facilitated by MacDonald's fatigue, Baldwin's lack of interest, and Simon's weakness, as well as Chamberlain's self-confidence and keen interest in diplomacy. Fisher and Chamberlain were closely aligned on foreign policy questions in the early 1930s. Like Fisher,

¹²² Roskill, *Hankey: Volume II*, 343-344; Middlemas and Barnes, *Baldwin*, 318; 496.

¹²³ TNA, PRO/30/69/483, Baldwin to MacDonald, 8 March 1932; CAC, LEEP/1/16, 21 February 1933; CRL, AP/14/1/225, Eden to Simon, 26 April 1933.

¹²⁴ Vansittart, *Mist Procession*, 427-428; Neville Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 31 March 1935 in Robert Self (ed.), *The Austen Chamberlain Diary Letters, 1916-1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 480.

¹²⁵ Neville Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 4 December 1932 and Neville Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 21 October 1933 in Self (ed.), *Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters, Volume 3*, 362-366; 407-408.

¹²⁶ CRL, NC/7/11/26/13, Fisher to Chamberlain, 25 April 1933.

¹²⁷ CRL, NC/2/21, 13 January 1924; NC/7/11/27/14, Fisher to Chamberlain, 12 December 1934.

¹²⁸ Robert Self, *Neville Chamberlain: A Biography* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 194-201.

Chamberlain wished to prioritise the German menace and pacify Japan to dispense with a degree of naval spending. They were also both keen to focus on air power to gain the maximum deterrent force with minimum expenditure. Chamberlain's biographer has convincingly asserted that Chamberlain 'established the defence agenda' and 'was the greatest single force in shaping British defence policy between 1934 and 1939'.¹²⁹

Circulated in early March 1934, the DRC report was poorly received. The collective influence project foundered as ministers sought 'any and every loophole of escape' from what they considered to be a hawkish rearmament programme.¹³⁰ They were driven by conceptions of pacific public opinion, fears for economic stability, and revulsion at the prospect of another war. Pacific-ists like MacDonald noted that 'militarists are pressing us for more arms; some they must get for replacement and filling up neglected stocks; but fundamentally they are on the old road that leads to competition and thence to war'.¹³¹ Similarly, Chamberlain balked at the 'staggering' sums of expenditure.¹³² Given ministers' reluctance, senior officials launched a concerted campaign to promote the DRC's recommendations. Hankey attempted to approach MacDonald during a weekend at Chequers, although such proximity did not gift him access as MacDonald was too distracted with political difficulties.¹³³ Hankey did, however, successfully use his privileged position as Cabinet Secretary to glean information when the Cabinet discussed the DRC report; he then sought to use these insights to outmanoeuvre opponents.¹³⁴ For instance, he warned Vansittart to expect trouble and Vansittart in turn cautioned the Director of Military Operations and Intelligence (Major-General Dill) to 'have his guns loaded' for a fight over the Expeditionary Force.¹³⁵ Hankey, Vansittart, and Dill then combined to brief the Secretary of State for War, Lord Hailsham, on the importance of the Expeditionary Force.¹³⁶ Vansittart, who attached great importance to the continental commitment, attempted to influence ministers' minds.¹³⁷ In a forensic memorandum designed to convince ministers to accept 'unpalatable' realities, Vansittart utilised his expert status and privileged sources of intelligence to dismiss any doubts as to the German threat.¹³⁸ MacDonald, however, prohibited discussion of Vansittart's paper in Cabinet. Meanwhile,

¹²⁹ Self, *Chamberlain*, 235-238.

¹³⁰ 19 March 1934 in Bond (ed.), *Pownall Diary. Volume I*, 39.

¹³¹ TNA, PRO/30/69/1753/1, 6 May 1934.

¹³² CRL, NC/2/23, 25 March 1934.

¹³³ CAC, HNKY/1/7, 4 March 1934.

¹³⁴ TNA, CAB/23/78/8, 7 March 1934.

¹³⁵ TNA, CAB/21/434, Hankey to Vansittart, 8 March 1934; Vansittart to Dill, 12 March 1934.

¹³⁶ 13 March 1934 in Bond (ed.), *Pownall Diary. Volume I*, 38.

¹³⁷ Roi, *Alternative to Appeasement*, 35.

¹³⁸ TNA, CAB/24/248, CP104 (34), 'The Future of Germany', Vansittart, 7 April 1934.

Fisher engaged in more targeted efforts. He organised a dinner at his club for Chatfield, Vansittart, Hankey, and Chamberlain, to ‘chat informally over the implications’ of the report.¹³⁹ Yet Fisher was not attempting to influence the Chancellor; instead, Fisher and Chamberlain collaborated in the unlikely hope of securing Chatfield, Vansittart, and Hankey’s support for their plan to amend the report’s programme. Much of these early attempts at lobbying were unsuccessful.

Divisions immediately appeared when the Cabinet considered the DRC report on 19 March.¹⁴⁰ Chamberlain proposed a limited liability plan to avoid heavy defence expenditure by curtailing Britain’s commitments; this proposal was successfully obstructed by the Chiefs of Staff and Hankey in combination.¹⁴¹ MacDonald repeatedly dithered and delayed any decision on the DRC report, reflecting his political priorities, his reluctance to confront the issue, and his failing faculties.¹⁴² Then, on 30 April, the Prime Minister agreed to Chamberlain’s cunning compromise that the DCM should consider the report without either the Prime Minister or Baldwin present, as both were too occupied with a Committee of Privileges to afford the inquiry sufficient attention.¹⁴³ Chamberlain expected to be appointed Chairman of the DCM and hoped to capitalise on MacDonald and Baldwin’s absence to dominate proceedings. He prepared a thorough plan before the first meeting.¹⁴⁴ Although Chamberlain was disappointed when MacDonald selected Simon as Chairman, this was a stroke of good luck. Unhindered by the responsibility for conducting meetings or building consensus, Chamberlain was free to pursue his own interests. The most dominant personality and the only minister to have devised a plan for proceedings, Chamberlain’s plan for the DCM to set aside political and financial questions and instead examine the DRC report on its strategic merit was duly accepted.¹⁴⁵ This was clever; it allowed Chamberlain to undermine the report’s strategic principles while reserving all financial commentary for his own departments, thus enabling the ‘Treasury view’ to dominate as the inquiry reached a climax.

¹³⁹ TNA, CAB/63/62, Fisher to Hankey, 9 April 1934.

¹⁴⁰ TNA, CAB/23/78/10, 19 March 1934.

¹⁴¹ CRL, NC/2/23, 25 March 1934, 27 March 1934 and 9 May 1934; Neville Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 5 May 1934, in Robert Self (ed.), *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters, Volume 4. The Downing Street Years, 1934-1940* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 69-70.

¹⁴² TNA, CAB/23/79/2, 25 April 1934; 2 May 1934 in Bond (ed.), *Pownall Diary. Volume I*, 41-42.

¹⁴³ TNA, CAB/23/79/3, 30 April 1934.

¹⁴⁴ CRL, NC/2/23, 3 May 1934.

¹⁴⁵ TNA, CAB/16/110, DC(M)(32), 3 May 1934.

During discussions on strategic priorities, Chamberlain and Fisher collaborated to stress the importance of returning to a state of 'cordiality and mutual respect with Japan'.¹⁴⁶ Chamberlain drew attention to Fisher's memorandum on the subject – which had caused such trouble in the DRC and which Hankey and Vansittart had intended to bury.¹⁴⁷ The document asserted that defence was as much a matter for the Treasury as for the Foreign Office and Service Departments, and reinforced Vansittart and the DRC report's recommendations that the principal danger stemmed from Germany. Ministers including Bolton Eyres-Monsell (First Lord of the Admiralty) and Anthony Eden disputed this view as Japan was a more immediate threat. Prioritising national above imperial defence, Chamberlain replied that 'the menace from Germany, even if it were remoter in time, was much closer to home'. Simon concurred with Chamberlain and, frustrated that the DCM was treading the same path as the DRC on the question of defence priorities, Hankey appealed to MacDonald. The Cabinet Secretary attempted to control the information reaching the Prime Minister in sending a strident report which claimed that Japan's 'whole outlook is tinged with militarism' and that the 'Japanese are expecting trouble ... conscientiously preparing for it'.¹⁴⁸ At the same time, Hankey pressed the DCM on the dangers of leaving the Far East defenceless. Both schemes failed to persuade the DCM to restore Japan to a position of prime importance. Although a defeat for Hankey, the DCM's decision to make Germany the priority was a victory for Vansittart, Fisher, and Chamberlain.

However, Fisher and Chamberlain were not able to secure all their goals in the Far East. Fisher's memorandum had controversially emphasised the benefits of Anglo-Japanese rapprochement and stressed that such an endeavour must not be jeopardised by any regard for the USA. He was thus ideologically congruent to Chamberlain, who wanted Britain to start 'making eyes at Japan' instead of 'flirting with' the USA, which was an undependable ally.¹⁴⁹ Fisher and Chamberlain lobbied Simon on Anglo-Japanese rapprochement, yet with limited effect as Simon doubted both the practicality and the wisdom of antagonising America.¹⁵⁰ This points to the difficulties of securing outcomes and controlling the flow of information, even when influential officials and ministers cooperated. It is likely that departmental memoranda which Vansittart laid before the

¹⁴⁶ TNA, CAB/16/110, DC(M)(32), 3 May 1934.

¹⁴⁷ TNA, CAB/16/111, NCM(35), 3, 'The Naval Conference, 1935', Fisher, 19 April 1934.

¹⁴⁸ TNA, PRO/30/69/756, Hankey to MacDonald, 22 June 1934.

¹⁴⁹ Neville Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 28 July 1934 in Self (ed.), *Diary Letters, Volume 4*, 80-85.

¹⁵⁰ CRL, NC/2/23, 20 April 1934; TNA, CAB/24/238, CP80 (34), 'Imperial Defence Policy', Simon, 16 March 1934.

Foreign Secretary contributed to Simon's perspective.¹⁵¹ Vansittart was to engage in similar efforts to obstruct Chamberlain and Fisher's designs on the Far East during 1934 and 1935.¹⁵² As Fisher became increasingly bold in his schemes and warned Vansittart not to 'frustrate or nullify' his rapprochement efforts, Vansittart railed against Treasury interference and the muddled 'working of Sir Warren Fisher's mind'.¹⁵³

As the DCM deliberated, Hankey and Vansittart allied with Lord Hailsham to lobby for Army requirements and rectify the weaknesses of the DRC's programme. Hailsham fought hard to secure funding for the Army and clashed repeatedly with Chamberlain, who was largely ignorant of the Army's needs and who downplayed the significance of a ground force because he believed air power was a more effective and cost-efficient alternative.¹⁵⁴ Hailsham sought experts' support and the Chiefs of the Staff produced a memorandum justifying the need for an Expeditionary Force: it had been expertly drafted by Hankey, who used his position occupying multiple nodes across the central state to intervene in deliberations from different angles.¹⁵⁵ Signed by the most senior Service officials, the report carried weight and reinforced the DRC's recommendations. Hailsham, who had also been briefed by Hankey, Vansittart, and Dill, after the circulation of the DRC report, mounted an admirable defence of a land commitment. Despite Chamberlain digging in his heels, ministers agreed that Britain must not fail to continue to take an interest in the Low Countries and accepted the principle that the Expeditionary Force should be bolstered into an effective ground force.¹⁵⁶ This was a pyrrhic victory for the Army as even those sympathetic to an Expeditionary Force – including Hankey and Vansittart – wanted the Army accorded the lowest priority of the three Services and spending spread over the longest period.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹ TNA, FO/371/17148, F/5189/5189/61, 'Far East – Changing Situation', 3 August 1933; FO/371/18160, F295/295/61, 'Situation in the Far East, 1933-1934', 16 January 1934; Vansittart's minutes 28 February and 13 March 1934; Vansittart's circular, 12 March 1934.

¹⁵² TNA, T/172/1831, Fergusson to Chancellor, 15 January 1935; Fisher to Chamberlain, 21 January 1935; FO/371/19245, F/6711/6/10, Vansittart's minute, 29 October 1935; FO/371/19245, F/6750/6/10, Vansittart's minute, 29 October 1935; FO/371/19245, F/6832/6/10, Hoare to Vansittart, 31 October 1935.

¹⁵³ TNA, CAB/21/540, Fisher to Vansittart, 23 May 1935; FO/371/19245, F/6729/6/10, Vansittart's minute, 29 October 1935.

¹⁵⁴ TNA, WO/32/4098, Montgomery-Massingberd to Hailsham, 23 March 1934; PREM/1/153 Hailsham to Hankey 6 March 1934 and 28 Feb 1934, Monsell to Hankey; CAB/16/110, DC(M)(32), 3 May 1934; CRL, NC/2/23, 9 May 1934.

¹⁵⁵ TNA, CAB/27/510, DC(M)(32), 109, 'Note by the Chiefs of Staff', 8 May 1934.

¹⁵⁶ 9 May 1934 in Bond (ed.), *Pownall Diary. Volume I*, 42-3; TNA, CAB/16/110, DC(M)(32), 10 May 1934; CAB/16/111, DC(M)(32), 15 May 1934

¹⁵⁷ CRL, AP/20/1/14, 4 May 1934.

Bitterly disappointed with the DRC's air power programme, Vansittart sought to compensate for his difficulties among peers by steering ministerial deliberations. In urging Simon to press for a more ambitious programme, Vansittart confessed that he had only signed the report – at Hankey's behest – 'because I thought the higher authority might take a different view'.¹⁵⁸ Vansittart was aided by the progressive deterioration in the international situation as estimates of German air strength increased.¹⁵⁹ He circulated fresh intelligence to ministers and advised that the DRC's air programme had already been over-taken by events.¹⁶⁰ Ministers ultimately required little convincing. As explored in chapter five, air power loomed large in ministers' minds, and they were naturally sympathetic to a great expansion of the air programme. Some ministers, like Eden, were befuddled by the advice from mandarins that the rate of air expansion was too slow, which contradicted that of the Air Ministry, who were 'least anxious to accelerate' the 'scarcely adequate' programme.¹⁶¹ Hankey and Vansittart held firm to the demand that the DRC's air programme must be expanded; Simon and Chamberlain also urged the Air Ministry to be more ambitious and imaginative. Yet the Secretary of State for Air (Lord Londonderry) vacillated on the question, as did Ellington.¹⁶² Infuriated by the incompetence of the air Ministry, Vansittart sought to regain the initiative. He hosted a dinner for the Prime Minister to interest him in air defence.¹⁶³ He also secured Simon's permission to circulate another memorandum, in which Vansittart reminded ministers that the Foreign Office could not 'make bricks without straw' and stridently repeated the warning that the DRC's programme of 52-squadrons was inadequate.¹⁶⁴ Yet much of this activity was perhaps unnecessary for it was the Air Ministry, and not the DCM, which needed convincing.

Once the DCM had reached agreement on broad principles, Chamberlain took responsibility for preparing the revised defence requirements in consultation with Fisher and the Service Departments. He privately confessed that he would not be bound by the DCM's discussions and would instead shape the report to his personal preferences. Although this was an arduous task, Chamberlain understood how to seize

¹⁵⁸ TNA, CAB/21/388, Vansittart to Simon, 14 May 1934.

¹⁵⁹ Maiolo, *Cry Havoc*, 97-98.

¹⁶⁰ TNA, CAB/24/249, C.P. 116 (34), 'German Re-Armament', Vansittart, 23 April 1934.

¹⁶¹ CRL, AP/20/1/14, 4 May 1934.

¹⁶² TNA, CAB/16/110, DC(M)(32), 4 May 1934; CAB/16/111, DC(M)(32), 15 May 1934; CAB/27/510, DC(M)(32), 115, 'Note by the Secretary of State for Air', 29 May 1934.

¹⁶³ TNA, PRO/30/69/1753/I, 2 June 1934.

¹⁶⁴ TNA, CAB/16/111, DC(M)(32), 117, 'Note by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs', 7 June 1934.

the initiative and set the agenda.¹⁶⁵ Hankey had the same idea and produced his own draft proposals, but as MacDonald was not interested and Chamberlain obstructive, his scheme failed.¹⁶⁶ When Chamberlain finally circulated his proposal on 20 June, he knew it would be poorly received.¹⁶⁷ The proposal reduced total expenditure from over £70 million to £50 million, cut the Army allocation from £40 million to £19.1 million, and that of the Navy from £21.1 million to £12 million. Meanwhile, the Home Defence Air Force was to be raised to 80 squadrons.¹⁶⁸ Chamberlain justified altering the strategic balance of the DRC report to such an extent on financial and political grounds. He asserted that as Germany posed the greatest threat, naval power must be a low priority, and ruled that it was impossible to spend large sums on the Army as 'public opinion' would reject the programme and thus wreck the whole endeavour of ameliorating defence deficiencies. Astonished and appalled, Hankey reached out to ministers to persuade them to resist the proposal. He met with Baldwin, Simon, and Eden, and correctly detected that he had succeeded in exerting some influence.¹⁶⁹ He also wrote to these ministers, as well as to MacDonald and to his fellow Permanent Under-Secretaries to reinforce his "education" efforts.¹⁷⁰ Hankey accepted – and had expected – cuts to the expensive programme, yet he stressed that 'whatever sums can be found ... should be expended' on a 'comparable' and 'balanced scheme'. Seeking to recover the initiative, Hankey suggested to MacDonald that 'the best procedure would be to invite some other body on which the Services are represented to make a counter-proposition for the allocation of the total ... expenditure contemplated by the Chancellor'.¹⁷¹ He coyly recommended that either the DRC or the Chiefs of Staff sub-Committee – both of which he attended – would suit.

By the time Chamberlain's proposals were discussed by the DCM, MacDonald and Baldwin had joined the committee.¹⁷² MacDonald agreed with Chamberlain's core principle that as the government was committed to low taxation, financial realities must necessarily curtail the DRC's recommendations. Baldwin toed the line urged upon him by Hankey: that any cuts must nonetheless be 'careful to preserve the agreed balance' between the Services which had been 'most carefully ... agreed by the experts'.

¹⁶⁵ Neville Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 12 May 1934 in Self (ed.), *Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters, Volume 4*, 70-71.

¹⁶⁶ 1 June and 11 June 1934 in Bond (ed.), *Pownall Diary. Volume I*, 44-45.

¹⁶⁷ Neville Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 17 June 1934 in Self (ed.), *Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters, Volume 4*, 74.

¹⁶⁸ TNA, CAB/16/111, D.C.(M)(32), 120, 'Note by the Chancellor of the Exchequer', 20 June 1934.

¹⁶⁹ TNA, CAB/63/49/61, Hankey to Eyres-Monsell, 22 June 1934.

¹⁷⁰ TNA, CAB/63/49/48-60, Hankey to MacDonald, 22 June 1934.

¹⁷¹ TNA, CAB/63/49/40-41, Hankey to MacDonald, 22 June 1934.

¹⁷² TNA, CAB/16/110, DC(M)(32), 25 June 1934.

MacDonald and Baldwin also admitted that they were less concerned with Europe than with the Far East, where there was wider 'scope for a mad dog'. Eden, whom Hankey had also "educated" on the need for naval strength felt that to overlook the Far East would embolden Japan and imperil Anglo-Dominion relations. Although he had not been able to control the flow of information reaching ministers, Hankey had therefore influenced an important group of ministers; they voiced and amplified his views, as distinct from those in the DRC report. Nevertheless, Chamberlain was no less determined than Hankey. He expected opposition and tactically 'pitched the note on purpose a little high' to secure 'most of what I want'.¹⁷³ He claimed that the strategic balance had been altered by the DCM's agreement that air power should be accorded higher priority. Moreover, responding directly to Baldwin's assertion that the experts had agreed on the principles underpinning the DRC report, Chamberlain burst the façade of unity which most members of the DRC had been so careful to preserve. He, too, understood that the weight of the recommendations – the very essence of collective influence – was embodied in the perception of unity and that to explode this myth of unity would undermine the DRC's report. Chamberlain claimed that his Permanent Secretary had privately disclosed 'certain reservations which he would have wished to make to the Report', and particularly on the air power programme. Hankey fiercely – and dishonestly – rebutted the allegation, claiming that 'Fisher had agreed in the balance struck between the requirements of the three Services', and had only 'raised a point about our relations with America'. Yet Chamberlain was a cunning nemesis. He even used the words which Hankey had drafted in the DRC report against him. Chamberlain drew attention to ministers' reluctance to overturn the strategic balance between the Services, given their eagerness to ignore the DRC's assertion that officials 'do not consider that there is any immediate danger or any present aggressive design' from Japan.¹⁷⁴

When deliberations continued without resolution, Baldwin and Chamberlain met to discuss the stalemate. Hankey whispered in Baldwin's ear before this meeting. He impressed on the Lord President the dangers of Chamberlain's strategically unsound proposal and pleaded the case for naval power. Hankey also resurrected the suggestion that Baldwin should refer the dispute to the Chiefs of Staff for expert opinion. Air power was duly remitted to a sub-Committee under Baldwin, which reported in mid-July.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Neville Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 1 July 1934 in Self (ed.), *Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters, Volume 4*, 76-77.

¹⁷⁴ The DRC report, as quoted by Chamberlain during a DCM meeting, in TNA, CAB/16/110, DC(M)(32), 25 June 1934.

¹⁷⁵ TNA, CAB/24/250, C.P. 193 (34), Interim Report on Air Defence, 16 July 1934.

The report struck a balance between the DRC and Chamberlain's proposals. It recommended a total of 75 squadrons, rather than 52, for Home Defence, 3.5 squadrons for the Fleet Air Arm, and 4 for Singapore and the Far East. The sub-Committee concurred that the situation should be kept under constant review, with the provisions expedited or expanded as necessary. Baldwin acknowledged that as air power offered the maximum effective defence for the minimum outlay, preparations in the Far East and the programmes for the Army and Navy had been unavoidably 'sacrificed to a considerable extent'.¹⁷⁶ Ministers approved the compromise programme in a great blow to Hankey, Chatfield, and Eyres-Monsell's efforts to influence deliberations in favour of the Navy.¹⁷⁷ Although Hankey had won small battles and seemingly affixed key actors like MacDonald and Baldwin to his 'imperial defence' network, such actors nonetheless devised and approved a programme which contradicted these principles.

The Admiralty strongly protested against its treatment and tried in vain to boost the sum allotted to the Navy to £20 million.¹⁷⁸ Chatfield appealed to Fisher on a personal level to intervene in the Admiralty's favour as he recognised that Fisher enjoyed the patronage of the most powerful minister.¹⁷⁹ In a particularly strident letter, Chatfield rebuked years of over-bearing Treasury interference: while acknowledging that the Treasury possessed the right to cap the total level of expenditure on defence programmes, Chatfield asserted that it was for the Chiefs of Staff to determine how the money should be spent. Such efforts were in vain. Ministers widely agreed that a comprehensive programme to ameliorate Naval deficiencies was too expensive, especially as the Far East had not been classified as the priority. They also hoped that the forthcoming Naval Conference would permit economics on expensive shipbuilding programmes. It was thus decided that Eyres-Monsell and Chamberlain would negotiate the construction programme together – finally agreed in December 1934 after much wrangling.¹⁸⁰ Once more demonstrating the value of patronage, Chamberlain also secured a role for Fisher in preparations for the Naval Conference, so that the Admiralty and the Foreign Office would be unable to ignore the 'Treasury view' on both naval policy and Anglo-Japanese rapprochement.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ TNA, CAB/16/110, DC(M)(32), 12 July 1934.

¹⁷⁷ TNA, CAB/23/79/14, 18 July 1934.

¹⁷⁸ TNA, CAB/16/111, DC(M)(32), 125, 'Naval Defence Requirements', Eyres-Monsell, 18 July 1934; CAB/16/110, DC(M)(32), 24 July 1934; ADM/116/3436, CNS to First Lord, 27 July 1934; 'Preliminary Remarks', 20 June 1934.

¹⁷⁹ TNA, CAB/21/434, Chatfield to Fisher, 16 July 1934.

¹⁸⁰ TNA, ADM/116/3436, CP291 (34), 'Navy Estimates, 1935', Chamberlain and Eyres-Monsell, 7 December 1934.

¹⁸¹ TNA, CAB/23/79/11, 27 June 1934.

Furthermore, after a prolonged struggle with Hailsham, Chamberlain had secured a reduced sum for the Army and thus made the principle of a continental commitment untenable.¹⁸² This was a disappointment to Hankey and Vansittart, who had pressed for a stronger Expeditionary Force and Territorial Army during the DRC and DCM's proceedings.¹⁸³ In contrast, Fisher supported the revised Army programme, despite having cooperated with his colleagues in the DRC to press Montgomery-Massingberd to be more ambitious. This was duplicitous for Fisher disagreed with the principle of high expenditure on the Army. Like Chamberlain, Fisher believed that air power, rather than land power, was the cheapest and most effective form of defence and deterrence. Fisher later revealed how he and Chamberlain had secretly plotted to slash provisions: 'you and I had several talks ... and you secured that the Cabinet ... halved the Army proposals and considerably increased the Air Force programme'.¹⁸⁴ This had skilfully been achieved by denying that the necessary expenditure was available, while stirring fears of another bloody stalemate on the Western Front and a public opinion backlash to redefine the parameters of what was financially and politically achievable.

The plan to ameliorate defence deficiencies ultimately bore far closer resemblance to Chamberlain's proposals than the DRC's recommendations. Ministers and Treasury officials had prioritised financial solvency and public opinion above strategic doctrines to pursue a programme of 'unilateral rearmament of one service only'.¹⁸⁵ Chamberlain's triumph was almost universal, and he crowed that he had 'won all along the line'.¹⁸⁶ Hankey was appalled at the outcome and resentful of Fisher's success in influencing Chamberlain.¹⁸⁷ In a desperate last attempt to achieve derivative influence and induce ministers to reject Chamberlain's proposals, Hankey approached MacDonald. In a strident letter to the Prime Minister, Hankey aired his grievances against the proposals and against Chamberlain with great freedom.¹⁸⁸ Yet MacDonald had retreated to Canada to recuperate after health conditions sapped his strength and

¹⁸² TNA, CAB/16/110, DC(M)(32), 17 July 1934; CAB/24/250, CP205 (34), DCM. Report, 31 July 1934

¹⁸³ 17 July 1934 in Bond (ed.), *Pownall Diary. Volume I*, 48.

¹⁸⁴ Fisher Papers, Fisher to Chamberlain, 1 October 1938.

¹⁸⁵ Ernle Chatfield, *The Navy and Defence, Volume II: It Might Happen Again* (London: William Heinemann, 1947), 83.

¹⁸⁶ Neville Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 28 July 1934 in Self (ed.), *Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters, Volume 4*, 80-85.

¹⁸⁷ CAC, HNKY/1/7, 4 March 1934 [written 9 August]; 30 July 1934 in Bond (ed.), *Pownall Diary. Volume I*, 49-50.

¹⁸⁸ TNA, CAB/21/398, Hankey to Prime Minister, 3 August 1934.

left him rambling incoherently.¹⁸⁹ Hardly a dominant and active Prime Minister, MacDonald's ill health accounts for at least some of the difficulties experienced by both Hankey and Vansittart in attempting to harness the premier to their cause. It was Hankey who was dispatched on a tour of the Dominions to 'educate' leaders as to the new defence deficiencies programme. Although physically absent from Whitehall, Hankey continued to bombard Baldwin with correspondence pleading for some redress in the defence programme. These letters were calculated to shrewdly turn Baldwin against Fisher, and to discredit policy advice associated with the Permanent Secretary and other Treasury figures. Hankey confessed to being 'apprehensive of Warren Fisher's influence ... I don't think he is a fit man or that his judgement is at its best. Moreover he has never been sound about the Navy or understood the defence question in the Pacific. I say this with the more regret that Warren is one of my greatest personal friends ... the Cabinet are over-rating the imminence of the German peril. The peril is there ... but will take much more than 5 years to develop ... I hope nothing will be done to let down the Navy. The Japanese have completed their "defence requirements"'.¹⁹⁰ However, despite such strident warnings and pleas, Hankey was unable to influence Baldwin to re-open the inquiry.

The ministerial inquiry is highly revealing of the nuances of derivative influence. Hankey and Vansittart used a range of tactics to persuade ministers to support a particular course of action. These efforts were not always successful or influential. Cause and association are vital distinctions when examining influence over others' behaviours or preferences, 'otherwise we may be as mistaken about power as a rooster who thinks his crowing makes the sun rise'.¹⁹¹ For instance, the influence of Vansittart's authoritative memoranda on air power is questionable as ministers were already highly favourable to increasing spending on the Air Force. Another important distinction is between short- and long-term influence. Hankey, for example, persuaded MacDonald, Baldwin, Eden, and Simon to support the prioritisation of the Far East and naval power. However, his attractive influence was not sufficient to permanently affix these individuals to the 'imperial defence' network he sought to construct. He was unable to isolate them from competing sources of information and impulses, not least concerning financial and political considerations, which ultimately held greater sway over their behaviour. Furthermore, the ministerial inquiry demonstrates how relationships

¹⁸⁹ David Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1977), 762

¹⁹⁰ For instance, CUL, Baldwin 1/40-41, Hankey to Baldwin, 23 August 1934; Baldwin 1/52-58, Hankey to Baldwin, 17 November 1934.

¹⁹¹ Nye, *Soft Power*, 2.

between mandarins and ministers could facilitate, but did not necessarily equate to, influence. Hankey and Vansittart enjoyed excellent relations with a range of ministers and possessed considerable resources. They alternated between casting a wide net – circulating documents to, and addressing, ministers as a group – and targeting specific ministers. They often approached those with whom they enjoyed the warmest relations and who appeared to be the most powerful individuals within Cabinet. Nevertheless, the relative balance of power between senior ministers was not as simple as it appeared. The Prime Minister, the Lord President, and the Foreign Secretary were all prominent Cabinet members – by grace of their offices and their rank within the party-political hierarchy. None, however, were active, decisive, or strong in the spring and summer of 1934. MacDonald was ill and found defence matters unpalatable; Baldwin – never one of life's workers – lacked interest in the issues; and Simon's capabilities as Foreign Secretary did not inspire confidence. Such ministers were poor pivots around which to construct a derivative influence strategy and were unable to counteract Chamberlain's devious tactics. Much political satire has revolved around the recurrent jest that officials prefer weak ministers who are easily dominated. The truth was that weak, unengaged ministers could not realise their officials' ambitions. Moreover, this suggests that mandarins' influence – even combined – was of secondary importance when a powerful minister sought to override it. Civil Service power then, is arguably at greater risk of being overemphasised than underemphasised. Britain was a constitutional democracy where engaged ministers could prevail rather than a bureaucratic state where mandarins reigned supreme.

While Vansittart and Hankey struggled to generate influence, this was not a problem for Fisher. Fisher achieved almost all his policy goals, despite being a far less active lobbyist than his peers and suffering from a debilitating skin or nerve complaint in 1933 and 1934.¹⁹² He alone enjoyed excellent relations with, and privileged access to, Chamberlain, who was the most powerful and active politician. Chamberlain was perhaps the only minister to rival the triumvirate of mandarins for their industry, tenacity, and ability to argue, manoeuvre, and plot. This, he combined with a seat at the decision-making table, and his position at the head of the most important department when spending matters were under discussion. Chamberlain won because he refused to countenance spending the total sum recommended and responded to the Services' demands with the unanswerable argument that financial prudence must underpin whichever principles replaced the Ten-Year Rule. Once he had established that the

¹⁹² CAC, OHPN/2, Talk with Robin Fisher, 21 May 1981.

DRC's programme must necessarily be modified on financial grounds, Chamberlain had ultimately opened the door to altering the balance between the Services and securing his desired outcome. Examining Chamberlain and Fisher's activities in terms of derivative influence raises several important points. It is difficult to ascertain the specific extent to which Fisher steered Chamberlain's preferences during their private, unrecorded discussions, although Fisher undeniably exerted influence. Their ideological congruence on how defence deficiencies should be ameliorated likely also stemmed from both inhabiting the same intellectual space of the Treasury and reading the same reports which travelling vertically through the department's thought chain. While historians have asserted that Chamberlain imposed his ideas on the Treasury and reached his own conclusions on policy questions, Fisher believed that he had germinated many of the seeds in Chamberlain's mind and contemporaries within Whitehall agreed that this was the case.¹⁹³ At the Treasury, notions of balanced budgets, lean expenditure, and the importance of economic stability reigned supreme until very late in the 1930s.¹⁹⁴ Fisher and Chamberlain acted in concert and shared a number of private talks during this period to strategise on how best to achieve their shared goals. Chamberlain voiced and amplified many of their joint concerns at the ministerial level and fought tenaciously – and cunningly – for their desired outcome. The relationship between officials, ministers, and the institutional machine is complex.¹⁹⁵ The relationship between Fisher and Chamberlain was not so straightforward as Fisher and the Treasury making Chamberlain powerful, nor Chamberlain making Fisher influential.

Conclusion

Hannah Arendt asserted that power is the ability 'to act in concert'. Individuals are empowered by their relations to others in the system. Both collective and derivative influence are fundamentally cooperative and represent interactions either between mandarins, or between mandarins and ministers. Officials must interact to thrive. They must collaborate and cooperate if they are to stand a chance of exerting influence in the

¹⁹³ Self, *Chamberlain*, 195; Peden, *British Rearmament*, 194-5; CAC, PHPP/1/3/3, Hankey to Phipps, 11 November 1938.

¹⁹⁴ For a snapshot of Treasury thinking of military spending, see, TNA, T/161/920, S/40156/1, Fisher's minute, 25 March 1936; T/161/855, S/48431/01/2, Bridges and Hopkins's minutes, 17 December 1937, and Fisher to Simon, 18 December 1937; CAB/21/902, Hopkins to Bridges, 17 October 1938.

¹⁹⁵ John Woods, 'Treasury Control', *Political Quarterly*, 25:4 (1954), 370-381 (381).

vast corridors of power. As Vansittart perceptively observed, ‘a lone voice can accomplish nothing’.¹⁹⁶ Elite mandarins understood how to play the game and were “Whitehall street smart”. They recognised one of the most important truths: to realise goals, they needed to cooperate, collaborate, and harness networks beyond the narrow confines of their departments.¹⁹⁷ Studying mandarins in isolation from each other, and from their relationships and interactions, therefore creates a misleading and distorted understanding of the Whitehall elite. They operated as a group, and this is how they must be studied. Fisher, Hankey, and Vansittart recognised that consensus would breed confidence in the DRC’s recommendations and thus strived for unity during the committee’s deliberations. They cooperated without conforming. Yet this unity was a façade and the collective influence project fractured as the inquiry moved to the ministerial arena. Mandarins each urged ministers to ignore the DRC’s recommendations and instead pursue a different course of action. This contrasting advice – from Vansittart pressing the need for air power against Germany, to Hankey stressing the importance of sea power in the Far East, and Fisher agitating for rapprochement with Japan – undermined collective influence efforts. Disunity highlighted the lack of consensus, undercut the weight of expert opinion, and assisted those seeking to obstruct large swathes of the DRC’s recommendations.

The study of power is enriched and nuanced in distinguishing between constructive and obstructive influence. The former is often the most difficult, as demonstrated by the defence deficiencies inquiry of 1933-1934. The issue under consideration was radical, costly, and aroused both intense interest and strong passion; in essence, the stakes of decision-making were high. Realising obstructive influence would have been easier as it would have leveraged the comfort of the status quo and required only the planting of doubts, rather than the creation and defence of a watertight case for change. To effect change was necessarily a more ambitious goal than to preserve the status quo. Constructive influence was also a challenge to the fundamentally conservative character of the central British state, which was generally averse to radical change. Yet contrary to popular belief, elite officials did not always defend the status quo. They could be agents of gradual change and respond to the dynamic world around them when they considered transformations to be compatible with their understanding of the ‘national interest’. As the DRC inquiry demonstrates, even when a group of officials enjoying almost every advantage sought to alter the status

¹⁹⁶ Vansittart, *Mist Procession*, 497.

¹⁹⁷ CAC, ROSK/7/92, Roskill to Morton, 6 June 1970.

quo, they discovered that constructive influence was elusive. The most potent combination was an ambitious, talented minister who was backed by a powerful department of state.

The triumvirate of elite mandarins sought to alter policy and, to a certain extent, succeeded: by 1934, the Ten-Year Rule had been abrogated and a new programme to ameliorate certain defence deficiencies had been accepted. That this programme fell short of the scale required for strategic and diplomatic endeavours is a central criticism in the existing historiography and led to the re-opening of the defence deficiency inquiry almost as soon as the ink had dried. Government policy had been changed, although not along the lines that certain actors had hoped. Particular individuals therefore had a greater influence on the outcome, and on different stages of the inquiry, than others. There is a counterfactual inherent in all studies of decision-making and constructive power; it begs the question whether ministers would have decided to ameliorate defence deficiencies, regardless of the activities of elite officials. The most likely answer is that they would, although not in the summer of 1934 and not on the scale ultimately agreed.

Chapter Five: Reforming the Machinery of Government

All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.¹

This thesis has already investigated elite mandarins' attempts to exercise obstructive and constructive influence through the policy-centric case studies of the Channel Tunnel and the Defence Requirements Committee. This chapter turns the spotlight to an administrative-centric case study to consider the extent to which elite officials succeeded in transforming the machinery of government. This is achieved through examining a project hitherto shrouded in considerable mystery, even in the voluminous literature on the First World War. The War Book was one of the most consequential yet understudied experiments with the machinery of government. It was an exercise in contingency planning in the civilian sphere. It was fundamentally a blueprint which set out every decision and action to be taken during a period of rising international tension and was designed so that the state would immediately be placed on a war footing at the time that hostilities were formally declared. While War Book plans were never perfect, years of contingency planning were generally superior to extemporary scrambling. Permanent Secretaries played a very important role in devising, preparing, and implementing the War Book between 1911 and 1939. The War Book project thus married senior officials who dominated Whitehall prior to the outbreak of the First World War with civil servants who rose to prominence in the interwar years. It is on the mindsets and activities of these elite mandarins that the chapter focuses.

The chapter begins by exploring the assumptions and attitudes underpinning mandarins' reforming efforts, and therefore offers an exposition of prevailing mindsets and cultures. Foremost amongst these was acute anxiety concerning technological progress, Britain's changing position in the world, and conceptions of 'time'. Mandarins struggled to accept the version of modernity confronting them and turned to contingency planning to mitigate against Britain's perceived weaknesses. The second

¹ J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (London: Harper Collins, 1994 edition), 51.

section illuminates the genesis and development of the War Book over a thirty-year period and touches on the extent to which the past was used as a guide. Furthermore, the third section investigates in greater depth how Permanent Secretaries devised, supported, and implemented the War Book by examining the question of the 'supreme control' in war. The fourth section replicates this approach yet instead uses civil defence planning as an investigative lens. In so doing, the chapter reflects on senior mandarins' influence in setting the agenda, devising reforms, and effecting change in the administrative, rather than policy, dimension. It also demonstrates that the process of innovation was not always smooth; the project often progressed sluggishly, arrested by layers of slow bureaucracy, distractions, and more urgent priorities. The chapter therefore also points to the gap between possessing agency to devise reforms and the ability to realise a grand vision against sclerotic bureaucratic inertia or political obstructionism. Finally, the conclusion briefly considers the longer-term impact of the War Book as well as how historically informed contingency planning became embedded within the fabric of the central state as both a useful and necessary exercise.

Mindsets and Anxieties

It is only through illuminating the 'ideological furniture' of those who dominated Whitehall in this period that their behaviours and activities can be understood.² This group of elite mandarins were a generation in the narrowest sense. They shared a 'collective conscience', having experienced specific events from similar locations and distilled from them similar meanings.³ They were undoubtedly shaped by the 'seminal catastrophe' of the twentieth century – the First World War – which they experienced differently to many Britons, for they were of fighting age but did not fight.⁴ Although several of the Whitehall elite attempted to enlist or else lost sons on the battlefields, they served instead in the corridors of power, gaining experience of interdepartmental

² James Joll, *1914: The Unspoken Assumptions, An Inaugural Lecture Delivered 25 April 1968* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), 6-7; 24.

³ T.G. Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Foreign Policy, 1865-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 18-19; Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, edited by Paul Kecskemeti (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), 276-320 (304-312).

⁴ Edward Bridges was an exception to this pattern. George Kennan quoted in Michael Wildt, *An Uncompromising Generation: The Nazi Leadership of the Reich Security Main Office*. Translated by Tom Lampert (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 21.

coordination and bureaucracy in wartime, as well as a lingering guilt complex.⁵ However, it is anachronistic and fallacious to focus solely on the impact of the First World War in understanding mindsets and assumptions. Although the war consolidated and accentuated transformations, it was neither the only, nor the most important, experience which mandarins interpreted in their collective conscience. The seeds of the culture of anxiety and planning which germinated the War Book project had, in fact, been planted over a decade prior to the First World War.⁶ Far from an age of *fin de siècle* romanticism, the late Victorian and Edwardian years were riddled with fears, and the trend of doom-laden despair continued into the interwar period. Yet, as Richard Overy's *Morbid Age* demonstrates, this interpretation was often mired in perceived, rather than real, threats.⁷

The first dominant strand of anxiety concerned the Empire and Britain's place in the world. This generation of elite officials were firmly wedded to Empire and believed that it was the foundation of Britain's status as the greatest power. Empire coloured their lives, from their education to their careers.⁸ From their childhood to adolescence and early manhood, several developments created the perception that the Empire was imperilled. Difficulties during the Boer Wars brutally demonstrated the limits of British military power and exposed the myth of British invincibility. While Britons' belief in Empire remained unshaken, complacency in the viability of the imperial project began to turn to anxiety.⁹ At the same time, new economic and military powerhouses emerged on the world stage at the turn of the century and British predominance confronted a series of challenges.¹⁰ Escalating fears of a major European war in the first decade of the twentieth century added to this unease. These developments were heavily coloured by Darwinian conceptions of survival of the fittest and scientific interest in the quality of a nation's 'stock'.¹¹ The belief that the English race was in decline was encouraged by morbid prophecies of a great civilisation rising and falling like Ancient Greece and Rome.¹² Such ideas found fertile soil in the minds of the

⁵ Robert Vansittart, *The Mist Procession: The Autobiography of Lord Vansittart* (London: Hutchinson, 1958), 136-146; John Wheeler-Bennett, *John Anderson: Viscount Waverley* (London: Macmillan, 1962), 117.

⁶ Joll, *Unspoken Assumptions*, 17.

⁷ Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain Between the Wars* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), especially the introduction; Martin Pugh, *'We Danced All Night': A Social History of Britain Between the Wars* (London: Vintage, 2009), especially the preface.

⁸ Simon Heffer, *The Age of Decadence* (London: Random House, 2017), chapter eleven.

⁹ Heffer, *Age of Decadence*, chapter four.

¹⁰ David Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century* (London and New York: Longman, 1991), 66-72.

¹¹ Heffer, *Age of Decadence*, chapter nine.

¹² Overy, *Morbid Age*, chapter one.

Classics-educated Whitehall elite. The prevailing climate of fear was evidenced in the state's quest for 'national efficiency' in the early twentieth century, from martial reforms to the creation of the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID). Furthermore, pre-First World War anxieties were subsequently reinforced and magnified by the shape of the post-war world. Despite Britain's victory in 1918, the First World War only amplified such worries. It was arguably the fear – albeit an overblown fear – of the dangers of Bolshevism which most dominated the British official mind in the 1920s.¹³ Moreover, the shaky peace settlement, economic frailty at home, the growing might of the USA, the spread of increasingly militant nationalist movements, and subsequently the twin dangers of Italian and Japanese imperial ambitions spurred further anxieties about the precarity of Britain's position. By the 1930s, the phantoms which had haunted the morbid and sensitive elite for decades had developed into corporeal dangers and posed a significant threat to the security and future of the British world order.

The second dominant strand of anxiety centred on scientific developments. Rapid technological innovation on a hitherto unparalleled scale changed the world during the Georgian giants' lifetimes.¹⁴ From motoring to aviation, and communications to entertainment, they lived through an exciting, but equally disorienting age. Innovation was often a cause for concern. While many of the elite embraced the motoring revolution, the air power revolution was regarded less with a heroic, adventuring spirit than with fear.¹⁵ Advancements in aviation were terrifying when translated to the military sphere: planes could wreak havoc on Britain's dominance in sea power, breach the natural defence of the Channel, and fundamentally alter the dynamics of the battlefield. They could also rain down death from the skies on civilians, as popular science fiction stories predicted. Such fears of aerial warfare only multiplied during the interwar period as air power developed exponentially. Between 1919 and 1938, the record flight speed was 2.7 times faster and the record flight distance 3.6 times further.¹⁶ As demonstrated in chapter four, the Whitehall elite were gripped by deep anxieties surrounding the possibility of a 'knock-out blow' – a pre-emptive aerial strike preceding a declaration of war, where the enemy would target industrial and urban areas, in order to break morale and destroy military-industrial capacity. The Air Staff continually increased estimates of the tonnage likely to be dropped on British cities as

¹³ An excellent recent study is Gill Bennett, *The Zinoviev Letter: The Conspiracy That Never Dies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), especially 12-13.

¹⁴ Heffer, *Age of Decadence*, especially chapters one and nine.

¹⁵ Pugh, *We Danced All Night*, chapter fifteen.

¹⁶ Uri Bialer, *The Shadow of the Bomber: The Fear of Air Attack and British Politics, 1932-1939* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1980), 153.

the trajectory of air power capabilities rocketed. However, the Chief of the Air Staff conceded that any estimate was 'pure guesswork'.¹⁷ As Stanley Baldwin admitted, the 'potentialities' of aerial warfare were 'incalculable and inconceivable'.¹⁸ Whitehall and the world beyond were terrorised by increasingly apocalyptic visions of death and destruction as aerial warfare became synonymous with Armageddon.¹⁹ This trope was found in popular science fiction books and films, and such dramatisations of futurological thought were then reinforced by newsreels of the bombing of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War.²⁰ Harold Macmillan was not exaggerating when he confessed that 'we thought of air warfare in 1938 rather as people think of nuclear war today'.²¹ Warren Fisher never forgot the haunting experience of 'watching with trepidation German aeroplanes following the course of the Thames' during the First World War.²² Maurice Hankey and John Anderson conceived of aerial warfare in apocalyptic visions of people 'being blown to bits'.²³ Always of a nervous disposition, Robert Vansittart was terrified of 'the speed and ease with which new types [of air power] are being developed makes it a far more formidable danger than anything in the way of naval or military armaments'.²⁴ At the heart of this anxiety was the realisation that the British Isles were no longer inviolable.

Technological innovation did not only pose a military threat to Britain's global position. It also created the disorienting perception that the world was shrinking as it grew more interconnected, and distances were shortened with advances in modes of travel and communication. From this distortion of space and time stemmed the sensation that time was accelerating. Indeed, this period was marked by great popular interest in the twin concepts of space and time, from Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity to Salvador Dali's time-twisting 'Persistence of Memory' (1931). Taken alongside the growing complexity of government business, technological innovation contributed to an overwhelming pace of decision-making. It was Horace Wilson who best articulated this disorientation and fatigue. In 1938, he confided to an intimate acquaintance that running the machinery of government was becoming impossible as 'the speed of life today was beyond the power of the intelligence and nervous system of

¹⁷ TNA, CAB 3/4, 143A, 'Note by the Air Staff', 24 October 1925.

¹⁸ Hansard, House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series, vol. 270, c. 632, 10 November 1932.

¹⁹ Overy, *The Morbid Age*, especially chapter 5.

²⁰ Bialer, *Shadow of the Bomber*, 153; Robert Mackay, *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain During the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 39-40.

²¹ Harold Macmillan, *Winds of Change, 1914-1939* (London: Macmillan, 1966), 522.

²² Warren Fisher, 'The Beginnings of Civil Defence', *Public Administration*, 26 (1948), 211-216 (213).

²³ CAC, HNKY 3/43, Hankey to Robin, 3 April 1938; TNA, CAB 46/1, 2 June 1924 and 23 June 1924

²⁴ TNA, CAB/63/46, Vansittart to Hankey, 18 January 1933.

the human being. Sound judgement could not be exercised under the conditions now ruling. Decisions had to be given ... without time for reflections'. Whereas previously communication delays had given ministers and mandarins time to think, innovations had created a dangerous 'competition in speed'.²⁵ The following year, Wilson expounded on the same theme to the Soviet Union's Ambassador. He told Ivan Maisky:

You belong to the same generation as I and must remember the time when only one event happened at any given moment, not a hundred, when one could live, breathe, move without haste ... But now ... Events are unfolding at such a frenzied, unstoppable pace that one barely has time to breathe. So what chance does one have of controlling events? You can count yourself lucky just to flow with the current and avoid the most overpowering blows ...²⁶

The War Book project was thus rooted in a series of political, scientific, and socio-economic events which were interpreted by mandarins as spelling the decline of the British Empire and civilisation. In this context, officialdom sought a solution to mitigate against British weaknesses, accelerating time, and the margins of error and delay shrinking. Armed with the tools of administration and a keen eye for lessons of past emergencies, mandarins embraced contingency planning as a legitimate and viable safeguard. The War Book was the most ambitious exercise in emergency planning in this period. It sought to create a blueprint to order the central state apparatus to run smoothly and efficiently in times of crisis. In essence, the War Book project aimed to 'prepare moulds into which the fluid strength of the nation may be poured when the time of danger' arrived.²⁷ In this way, time would not be wasted identifying and coordinating the cogs of the wartime machine, and schemes which might have taken two weeks to devise in the heat of a crisis might take only minutes to put into action. War Book planners were thus ultimately attempting to push back against a shrinking globe and accelerating clocks by manufacturing time.

²⁵ 28 June 1938 in Marguerite Dupree (ed.), *Lancashire and Whitehall: The Diary of Sir Raymond Streat. Volume I: 1931-39* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 576-578.

²⁶ 28 October 1939 in Gabriel Gorodetsky (ed.), *The Maisky Diaries: Red Ambassador to the Court of St James's, 1932-1943*, translated by Tatiana Sorokina and Oliver Ready (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 236-237.

²⁷ W.K. Hancock and M.M. Gowing, *British War Economy* (London: HMSO, 1949), 62.

The Development of the War Book, 1911-1939

Established in 1904 to advise on national and imperial security, the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) became the focal point of small-scale contingency planning, including censorship, in the early years of the twentieth century.²⁸ The Naval Assistant Secretary to the CID – none other than Hankey – possessed a keen eye for organisation and coordination, and envisioned a more ambitious scale of contingency planning.²⁹ He circulated a memorandum to the CID, calling for the creation to a sub-committee ‘to elaborate a system for coordination ... action ... on the occurrence of strained relations and on the outbreak of war’.³⁰ He stressed that such preparations would have a considerable impact on mobilisation and the success of operations. Hankey’s memorandum stirred the CID to create a sub-committee for the Coordination of Departmental Action on the Outbreak of War in April 1911.³¹ It was comprised almost entirely of Permanent Secretaries. As Chairman, Arthur Nicolson (Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office) successfully encouraged his colleagues to outline the actions which their departments should take, as well as the support they would require from other departments in an emergency.³² Against the backdrop of rising international tensions, from the Agadir crisis to turmoil in the Balkans between 1911 and 1914, senior mandarins discussed principles, while it fell to junior officials to elaborate the detail of plans. This often involved a difficult struggle against ‘official inertia’ and rivalrous departmentalism.³³ Nevertheless, the Coordination Committee was made a standing sub-committee in 1913 and charged with keeping the War Book continually under review. While mandarins reflected a pervasive culture of anxiety, this marked the first step towards inculcating a culture of contingency planning within Whitehall. The elite thus began to instil values, assumptions, and modes of thought in the institution. In this way, in confronting a terrifying version of modernity, officials began to shape the environment for their successors.

²⁸ Hastings Ismay, *The Memoirs of General the Lord Ismay* (London: Heinemann, 1960), 45-47; Franklyn Johnson, *Defence by Committee: The British Committee of Imperial Defence, 1885-1959* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 95-96.

²⁹ Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets. Volume I, 1877-1918* (London: Collins, 1970), 78-86.

³⁰ TNA, CAB/38/16/21, 121B, ‘Coordination of Departmental Action on the Outbreak of War’, 4 November 1910.

³¹ TNA, CAB/15/2, K-4, 5 April 1911.

³² TNA, CAB/15/2, K5, Note by the Home Office, 24 April 1911; K10, ‘Note of Action to be taken by the Foreign Office’, 4 July 1911.

³³ CAC, HNKY/8/29, ‘Talk between Aston and Hankey’, 3 March 1931.

The War Book was finally completed on the eve of war.³⁴ Running to 318 pages, it dealt with a wide range of issues, including the protection of vulnerable points, censorship, and the control of enemy shipping. Each chapter laid down departmental responsibilities, with long lists of decisions which had been coordinated and cross-referenced. The necessary bills, proclamations, telegrams, and letters were all pre-printed and classified in order of priority to avoid flooding lines of communication. The volume was divided into two stages. The 'precautionary stage' characterised strained relations; during this time, preparations were to be made to start the national engine and put it into gear. Approximately forty-eight hours later, the 'war stage' would follow: when the machine would spring, fully formed, into action. The War Book was opened in the last days of July 1914 and proved to be an effective mechanism for coordination.³⁵ Naturally, there were omissions. Officials could not have anticipated the ultimate scale of war, for total war was a hitherto unknown phenomenon.³⁶ Omissions included the transfer of industry to wartime production, the mobilisation of industrial manpower, and the question of executive direction in war.³⁷ These issues were improvised extemporarily and impacted on the effective prosecution of the conflict. It is therefore evident that mandarins enjoyed considerable success in transforming the machinery of government to meet an unknown contingency. This is perhaps surprising given the discussion of reforming mindsets (or, rather, the lack of a reforming spirit) amongst elite officials in the second chapter. However, it is important to recognise that reforming the administrative apparatus of war was a fundamentally reactionary activity: driven by fear, it sought to preserve the status quo of the British world order.

Maurice Hankey was a central figure in embedding contingency planning into the fabric of Whitehall culture. He never doubted that it was of such value that it should continue postbellum; nor did he doubt that the conflict represented a learning experience. During the war, he convinced the Reconstruction Committee to direct departments to record their experiences of 'the practical working of all war administrative machinery' and was particularly interested in 'imperfections' and 'suggestions as to remedies'.³⁸ To expedite this sluggish process, just ten days after the armistice, Hankey pressed the War Cabinet to recognise that it was a 'matter of the first

³⁴ TNA, CAB/15/5, War Book, 1914 edition.

³⁵ BRGS/1/1, Memoir, ff. 36-37; Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 131-133; Roskill, *Hankey. Volume I*, 140.

³⁶ David Bell disagrees: *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007).

³⁷ Hancock and Gowing, *War Economy*, 3-29.

³⁸ TNA, T/1/11950, Hankey to Treasury, 25 July 1916.

importance that the experience of the present war should be available in practical form for any future war'.³⁹ Departments duly submitted their reports, detailing the omissions in the first War Book and describing their innovations and remedies.⁴⁰ Some thought Hankey, by this time Secretary to the Cabinet and the CID, obsessed with war readiness.⁴¹ He was, and nor was this fixation entirely altruistic. He privately confessed to his deputy, Tom Jones, that 'the Department that has the War Book has the key of the whole defence organisation in its hands'.⁴² An ambitious man with a keen eye for power, Hankey wished to consolidate the newly-created Cabinet Office as a predominant organ of the central state and to secure his own position. Amid post-war turmoil and fatigue, as well as hopes for a lasting future peace, contingency planning was a low priority. However, it was the CID's responsibility to overcome this war weariness, look ahead, learn from the past, and recast defensive preparations.⁴³ The Coordination Committee was reconstituted in February 1920 and tasked with investigating 'the machinery set up during the war, the powers exercised, and the steps probably necessary to re-establish [the machine] in another war'.⁴⁴

Key principles governed interwar planning. Reflecting geopolitical anxieties of the time, the metaphorical 'concert in sight' was assumed to be a large-scale war against either Germany, or Germany and Russia in combination. Preparations always centred on a 'worst-case' scenario of total war as it was believed to be more straightforward to scale down plans for a smaller conflict than to scale up measures for a larger-than-anticipated war.⁴⁵ The most crucial aspect of the War Book's rationale was a firm belief in 'institutional memory'. It was deemed likely that those who had been closely involved with the First World War volume would have retired by the outbreak of the next war, and thus recording experiences and reflections before retirement, and while memories were fresh was invaluable. This principle intersected closely with the Civil Service's wider tradition of preserving records as a store of experience and knowledge. There was also a clear belief in the value of applied history, where the lessons of the past would be distilled and recorded to guide – but never to determine – actions and decisions in the future. This is not so surprising given how the historical mindedness of senior officials, the majority of whom had read either History or Classics at university, or else were

³⁹ TNA, CAB/24/70, GT6338, Memorandum, Hankey, 21 November 1918.

⁴⁰ TNA, CAB/15/6/18, 'Home Office Memorandum on the Revision of the War Book', June 1919.

⁴¹ CAC, BRGS/1/1, Memoir, ff. 36-37.

⁴² 11 February 1919 in Keith Middlemas (ed.), *Thomas Jones, Whitehall Diary. Volume 1: 1916-1925* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 76-77.

⁴³ Ismay, *Memoirs*, 50.

⁴⁴ TNA, CAB/15/1, K8, 11 February 1920.

⁴⁵ TNA, CAB/15/1, W-4, Fourth Report, 24 June 1920.

keenly interested in history, as evidenced by their reading choices and the use of historical allusions and metaphors in their writings. Nevertheless, planners recognised some of the pitfalls of the historical method: drawing incorrect lessons from the past; lulling officials into a false sense of security; tamping down imagination or innovation. The mistake of 'preparing for the last war' would be the result of misusing experience and creating a mindset of 'memorising and repeating ... past behaviour' rather than recognising 'the problems it ought to look for'.⁴⁶

Concerned about stifling imaginations by only looking in the rear-view mirror, Fisher reminded his colleagues that the War Book 'did not pretend to be comprehensive' or infallible and urged them not to restrict their minds to what had been previously devised.⁴⁷ Elite officials also recognised the danger that War Book plans – if misinterpreted, misapplied, or inappropriate – could be a greater obstacle than a 'clear sheet and a clear mind' in a crisis. Elaborating on this concern, Hastings Ismay (at this point, Assistant Secretary to the CID) cogently argued that:

Younger and fresher minds ... may see further and more clearly ... It is not for us to be confident that, because we know more of the past we can ... see more clearly than they do into the future. What we can do is to record for them our experience, and our reflections upon it.⁴⁸

Senior civil servants played a leading role in compiling the War Book, often through the activities of the Coordination Committee, which was responsible for revising chapters relating to each department's sphere of activity, and for constructing the necessary apparatus of government. A wide circle of officials was therefore drawn into preparations and became familiar with War Book planning. Fisher, for example, played an important role in preparing Whitehall for the descent into war through his work on manpower and broadcasting arrangements.⁴⁹ John Anderson was also active and keenly interested in preparations, not least because many of the issues under discussion were under the direct purview of his department, including policing, security, civil defence, emergency services, and communications. Hankey was an even more active participant and took personal responsibility for devising the Cabinet

⁴⁶ Hancock and Gowing, *British War Economy*, 52.

⁴⁷ TNA, CAB/15/1, K27, 18 March 1939.

⁴⁸ Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London, London [hereafter Liddell Hart Centre], ISMAY 1/3, 'Principles of Preparation for War'.

⁴⁹ For example, TNA, T/162/641, E33660/1, Hankey to Fisher, 18 March 1936; Mobilisation (Civil Departments) Committee papers.

Office's War Book chapter.⁵⁰ Furthermore, as Cabinet Secretary from 1938, Edward Bridges was a vital driving force in reforming and implementing the War Book in the dying months of peace.

Nevertheless, several obstacles arrested and delayed the progress of War Book preparations. Obstacles such as bureaucratic inertia and competing priorities point to the difficulties encountered by elite officials in effecting change.⁵¹ This was particularly true in the 1920s, when a broad optimism for peace and stability demoted contingency planning to a lesser priority. From the Locarno Pact to the Kellogg-Briand Pact, the mid-1920s represented the apotheosis of interwar confidence in European stability. However, planning did not cease; suspicions as to Germany's future path lingered, while communism remained a great danger in the East, and American economic hegemony posed a challenge. There existed, moreover, an expectation that the War Book must continue to be revised and improved.

Developing the War Book in the 1920s was an exercise in persisting with sluggish progress. By 1928 – and by the time the Home Office, Foreign Office, and Cabinet Office chapters had each undergone two revisions – the Treasury had yet to submit its chapter to the Coordination Committee. Richard Hopkins took the matter in hand and insisted that Treasury officials compile the necessary information.⁵² Months later, in mid-1929, he presented the department's chapter to Fisher.⁵³ After a decade of obfuscation, the chapter amounted to three pages.⁵⁴ The Treasury was responsible for staffing new wartime departments, consulting with the Board of Trade on blockade matters, consulting with the Governor of the Bank of England on credit facilities, and preparing a war loan bill. In the 1930s, more thorough planners, namely Bridges and James Rae, considerably expanded the scope of the Treasury's activities in a crisis.⁵⁵ The Foreign, Cabinet, and Home Offices also possessed complex and wide responsibilities in times of war, from sounding the alarm at the deteriorating international situation to civil defence activities. The second War Book, compiled during the interwar years, was more ambitious and comprehensive than the first. As contingency planning became more complex, the War Book shifted from a template of departmental chapters to thematic chapters to better capture the cooperative, cross-Whitehall nature of preparations. It

⁵⁰ TNA, CAB/21/2577, 'Cabinet Office Internal War Book', 15 November 1930.

⁵¹ For example, TNA, CAB/15/22, K165, Anderson to Hankey, 3 December 1929.

⁵² TNA, T/199/98, Hopkins to Hawtrey, September 1928; Hopkins minute, 28 May 1929.

⁵³ TNA, T/199/98, Hopkins to Fisher, 6 June 1929.

⁵⁴ TNA, CAB/21/2579, 'Entries Recommended in a Treasury Chapter', 5 July 1929.

⁵⁵ TNA, CAB/15/24, K294, 'Progress Report on the Treasury War Book', 10 February 1938.

thus recorded 'all the measures that are involved in passing from a state of peace to a state of war' and ensured 'not only that all Departments ... know the precise measures required to them at each stage ... but also that the actions of ... Departments are closely and continuously coordinated'.⁵⁶

In the second half of the 1930s, the structure of the War Book was reformed once more. War Book planning accelerated from 1935 as the international situation grew steadily darker and preparations assumed a new urgency.⁵⁷ However, many of the schemes contained within the volume remained nebulous until 1938.⁵⁸ By the summer of 1938, officials were acutely anxious about the international situation and the readiness of contingency plans.⁵⁹ Munich in the autumn simultaneously provoked greater urgency in preparations and exposed numerous shortcomings. It spurred a thorough post-crisis stock-taking as officials reflected on the immediate past, distilled vital lessons, and ultimately treated Munich as a wargame.⁶⁰

When the Coordination Committee convened on 23 September 1938 to consider the situation, officials were frustrated with timid ministers' concerns that implementing War Book plans prematurely might further strain international relations and thus precipitate a conflict. While civil servants had enjoyed considerable latitude in devising preparations and constructing the necessary machinery, the authority to institute plans rested with the Cabinet, and so the psychological war-readiness of ministers was a potentially fatal complication. Such fears had been present even before the Great War, when Edward Troup of the Home Office had doubted that the cautious Cabinet would institute the necessary measures sufficiently early, thus upsetting the timetable for preparations.⁶¹ Troup had suggested adding an extra stage to the War Book to overcome this challenge, and this recurrent proposal reflected anxieties surrounding the pace of decision-making, as well as wider distrust of politicians' judgement. During the Munich crisis, Permanent Secretaries began to debate the notion of a 'preparatory period' to precede the 'precautionary stage'; this would permit the engine of war to be ignited more than forty-eight hours before a declaration of war to further ready the machine.⁶² Moreover, constituting hushed and entirely non-aggressive manoeuvres such as

⁵⁶ TNA, CAB/104/93, 'Government War Book', Ismay, September 1938.

⁵⁷ TNA, CAB/15/36, Provisional War Book, 1935; CAB/15/1, K-23, Meeting 8 April 1936.

⁵⁸ TNA, CAB/15/24, K263, 'Home Office Progress Report', 18 November 1936; K287, 'Home Office Progress Report', 12 November 1937

⁵⁹ TNA, CAB/15/33, K(WB)240, 8 June; K(WB)242, Cadogan to Hankey, 10 June 1938.

⁶⁰ TNA, CAB/3/8, 301A, Report, 12 November 1938.

⁶¹ TNA, CAB/15/2, K-26, 17 October 1911.

⁶² TNA, CAB/15/1, K26, 23 September 1938; CAB/15/24, K298, 24 September 1938.

ensorship, the manning of coastal defences, and the protection of vulnerable points, the 'preparatory period' was designed to overcome ministerial timidity. From his new position as Secretary to the CID and using the momentum generated by the crisis to 'strike while the iron is hot', Hastings Ismay successfully spearheaded attempts to secure ministerial approval for the reform.⁶³ He found much support across Whitehall and even in Cabinet as the crisis had 'brought to light the hesitancy which (so strangely) exists to institute a Precautionary Stage' and how 'these War Book things, though they can be done quickly, not always are'.⁶⁴

By August 1939, peace, as John Anderson confessed to his father, hung 'by a very slender thread'.⁶⁵ On 23 August, the CID authorised the institution of the 'preparatory period' and the apparatus of war was placed into first gear.⁶⁶ Three days later, on 26 August, the Co-ordination Committee convened at the Prime Minister's request.⁶⁷ Bridges explained that officials had to recommend which actions within the 'precautionary stage' could no longer be safely delayed and which were neither provocative, nor would attract undue publicity. Civil servants laboured over the War Book, scouring chapter-by-chapter for such measures. The procedure should have been simple: a single telegram – 'Institute Precautionary Stage' – to set in motion a chain of measures across the world. However, Cabinet later the same day delayed instituting either the 'precautionary stage' or the list of preparations recommended by permanent secretaries.⁶⁸ This was the Cabinet's first substantial deviation from the War Book plans. Yet, ministerial hesitancy was not the sole obstacle to the smooth functioning of the War Book. When Home Office officials attempted to despatch the batches of pre-printed telegrams which ordered the promulgation of Defence Regulations, the incompetence of their Permanent Under-Secretary, Alexander Maxwell, became apparent. The codeword to authorise synchronising at the BBC – to prevent enemy aircraft from tapping into the wavelengths – had been stored in Maxwell's safe. Yet, 'in a fit of absentmindedness which sometimes overcame him, he had picked it up ... could not make head or tail of it and had thrown it into his wastepaper-basket'.⁶⁹

⁶³ TNA, CAB/104/93, Home Defence Committee minutes, 1 December 1938

⁶⁴ TNA, CAB/104/93, Pownall to Ismay, 7 December 1938.

⁶⁵ BL, MSS Eur F 207/34, Anderson to father, 29 August 1939.

⁶⁶ CAC, WELL/Acc. 115, Memoir.

⁶⁷ TNA, CAB/15/1, K28, 26 August 1939, 5.15pm.

⁶⁸ TNA, CAB/15/1, K29, 26 August 1939, 9pm.

⁶⁹ CAC, WELL/Acc. 115, Memoir.

As storm clouds gathered overhead, Bridges became concerned that the Cabinet was delaying the 'precautionary stage' beyond what was wise. He grasped the inherent danger in delay; only some of the measures included in the 'precautionary stage' had been actioned, and as the stages and measures were interdependent, further hesitation risked the entire machine missing a gear as the cogs began to move discordantly and so grinding to a halt. Bridges wrote to Wilson, the premier's right-hand man, urging him to address the issue with Neville Chamberlain.⁷⁰ This warning – along with others – went unheeded.⁷¹ Ministers were reluctant to take the necessary decisions. Quite apart from concerns of provoking Adolf Hitler when the French were unwilling to formally commit to war, the Prime Minister was also hopeful of accommodation with Germany.⁷²

Senior officials were therefore forced to bow to political hesitancy. They met daily and spent hours determining the minimum measures which could no longer be safely postponed; each evening the Cabinet authorised a series of further preparations. By 31 August, almost all the measures in the 'precautionary stage' had been actioned, although the stage was only formally instituted on 1 September when the German army crossed the Polish frontier.⁷³ By the end of the day, telegram boxes once stuffed with thousands of messages lay almost empty.⁷⁴ The Coordination Committee convened for the final time on 3 September. Officials sat in conclave as the 11.00am ultimatum to Germany expired; at 11.13am, Bridges returned from the Cabinet room to inform his colleagues that the time had come to despatch the telegrams which instituted the 'war stage' throughout the British Empire.⁷⁵ Last-minute improvisations had been untidy, yet ultimately effective. Whitehall was once more at war.

The 'Supreme Control'

The 'supreme control' concerned the system of executive direction in war and was of paramount importance. Arrangements for the 'supreme control' had been

⁷⁰ TNA, CAB/104/94, Bridges to Wilson, 25 August 1939.

⁷¹ See CAC, HOBE/1/7, 26 August – 31 August 1939.

⁷² 23 August 1939 in Brian Bond (ed.), *Chief of Staff: The Diaries of Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Pownall. Volume I: 1933-1940* (London: Leo Cooper, 1972), 218-220.

⁷³ Ismay, *Memoirs*, 97.

⁷⁴ CAC, WELL/Acc. 115, Memoir.

⁷⁵ TNA, CAB/15/24, K323, 3 September 1939, 10.30am; HO/45/19760, Burgis to miscellaneous officials, 3 September 1939, 11.15am.

beyond the scope of planners prior to the First World War. H.H. Asquith's 'business as usual' approach soon proved inadequate and his gradual reform of the Cabinet system between 1914 and 1916 was insufficient. Upon becoming Prime Minister in December 1916, David Lloyd George established a small, executive War Cabinet, including Ministers without Portfolio who were unburdened by departmental duties. This body of six was served by the secretariat. These innovations taken in combination – a dynamic premier, a small executive and a secretariat – eased strains in the state apparatus, facilitated greater coordination, and offered stronger executive direction.⁷⁶ After the war, having witnessed first-hand the strengths and deficiencies of Asquith and Lloyd George's contrasting systems, Hankey drafted a document which detailed the organisation of the War Cabinet and the secretariat to guide future generations.⁷⁷ The Cabinet Secretary detailed the various experiments with the executive direction of war and outlined the capabilities of each to cope with the demands of total war. Reflecting on his experience, he recommended that in total war, only a small War Cabinet, supplemented by smaller non-executive committees, would suffice.⁷⁸ The Chiefs of Staff concurred and supported the principle that the lessons of past wars and emergencies 'should be on record for the benefit of future Governments which may find themselves confronted with similar situations'.⁷⁹ Hankey's memorandum was thus included in the War Book. It was laid down that in a crisis, the Cabinet Secretary was responsible for placing in the hands of the Prime Minister a memorandum explaining the evolution of the system during the First World War and presenting options to suit a range of scenarios, although the decision as to which system would be adopted rested with the Prime Minister of the day.

Questions of executive control subsequently received very little attention until the summer of 1938. One of Edward Bridges's first actions upon succeeding Hankey was to comb over the War Book and familiarise himself with his responsibilities as Cabinet Secretary.⁸⁰ Bridges also sought Hasting Ismay's guidance given the man's past intimacy with War Book preparations.⁸¹ Bridges's actions emphasised that institutional memory was embodied in people as much as in dry documents; there was a performative dimension to the transmission of Whitehall's memory. As the Munich crisis developed,

⁷⁶ Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, 144-147.

⁷⁷ TNA, CAB/15/39, 'Memorandum on the Organisation of the War Cabinet Secretariat'.

⁷⁸ TNA, CAB/175/7, 'Memorandum on the System of Government Control during the War of 1914-1918'; 882B, 'Supreme Control in War'.

⁷⁹ TNA, CAB/175/5, 883B, 'Supreme Control in War', Trenchard, Madden and Milne, 23 May 1928.

⁸⁰ CAC, HNKY/4/30, Bridges to Hankey, 7 August 1938.

⁸¹ TNA, CAB/104/123, Bridges to Ismay, 11 September 1938.

Bridges fulfilled his duty and placed into Chamberlain's hands Hankey's memorandum on the 'supreme control'. He advised Chamberlain that 'in the event of ... a war of unlimited character ... the War Cabinet system would be immediately essential'.⁸² There was no margin for error in a world where the enemy could strike with great force at short notice. Chamberlain also consulted with Hankey during the Munich crisis, hoping to learn from his personal experience and long expertise.⁸³ The Prime Minister, however, remained undecided on the question of executive control should war break out.⁸⁴ His reluctance to be drawn on the matter is easily explained by his fervent belief that war could be avoided. Nevertheless, Bridges sought to 'harvest the experience' of Munich to devise solutions to problems which the crisis had highlighted.⁸⁵ He wished the Prime Minister to place on record which decision he would have taken had war broken out, as a guide in future crises.⁸⁶ Fellow officials agreed with Bridges that on the matter of the 'supreme control', it would be beneficial for the premier of the day to be presented with a clear plan of action to approve, rather than a series of options. Rupert Howarth (Deputy Cabinet Secretary) admitted that the issue was so significant 'because the time factor is so much more important now than in 1914'.⁸⁷ Horace Wilson broadly agreed on the recommendation of a small War Cabinet with executive responsibility in the event of a large-scale war and concurred that the 'time factor' was increasingly important.⁸⁸ Senior civil servants induced Chamberlain to contribute to the communal store of experience; the Prime Minister duly placed in the War Book an addendum that he would have formed a small, executive War Cabinet in the autumn of 1938.⁸⁹

The issue of executive direction arose once more as the international scene darkened in the summer of 1939. On 23 August, as the Nazi-Soviet agreement was signed, Chamberlain sought Hankey's advice on establishing a War Cabinet.⁹⁰ They discussed the innovations and strengths of Lloyd George's system and Hankey emphasised the importance of a small group of ministers, largely free from departmental responsibilities.⁹¹ The premier valued Hankey as an official who had been down the proverbial mine before and who might know the way out. Similar to Bridges's

⁸² TNA, CAB/104/123, Bridges to Chamberlain, 17 September 1938.

⁸³ CAC, HNKY/4/30, Inskip to Hankey, 12 September 1938.

⁸⁴ CAC, HNKY/1/7, 27 September 1938.

⁸⁵ TNA, CAB/104/124, 'The Supreme Control in War: Summary of Papers'.

⁸⁶ TNA, CAB/175/7, Bridges to Wilson, 5 November 1938.

⁸⁷ TNA, CAB/104/123, Memorandum, Howarth, 7 November 1938.

⁸⁸ TNA, CAB/175/7, Wilson to Fisher, 2 December 1938.

⁸⁹ TNA, CAB/175/7, Fisher to Chamberlain, 7 December 1938; 'Minute by the Prime Minister', 7 December 1938.

⁹⁰ CAC, HNKY/1/7, 23 August 1939.

⁹¹ TNA, PREM/1/384, 'War Cabinet', Hankey, 24 August 1939.

consultations with Ismay, Chamberlain's reliance on Hankey during informal consultations further suggests a performative dimension to the transmission of institutional memory. On the outbreak of war, Chamberlain appointed a War Cabinet of nine members, one of whom was Hankey himself. The bloated, ageing body raised eyebrows; it was perceived as a War Cabinet in name only which could not effectively direct the war effort.⁹² While members of the War Cabinet, such as John Simon and Hankey, defended the body as being the twin of that created in 1916, it was not what senior civil servants throughout the interwar period had recommended.⁹³ Bridges admitted to Wilson that he felt 'a good deal perturbed' by the size and composition of the War Cabinet, while other officials agreed that it violated the 'soundest' principles established by Lloyd George – and even agreed by Chamberlain months prior.⁹⁴ Civil servants had laid careful plans and drawn on past experiences. Yet even though officials had learned some of the lessons of the past, politicians had not, and failed to grasp the importance of a small, executive War Cabinet.

The personality of statesmen was one of the most important aspects of the 'supreme control', and yet it was out of the hands of senior planners. Chamberlain was ultimately a poor wartime premier; he was more Asquithian than Lloyd Georgian in his methods.⁹⁵ It was only in May 1940 when Winston Churchill replaced Chamberlain that 'Whitehall was galvanised ... We realised we were at war'.⁹⁶ Churchill, who had served in bloated cabinets in the First and Second World Wars, understood the lessons of his experiences and instituted the smaller, more dynamic War Cabinet. Moreover, Bridges recalled that the apparatus of government also began to operate at a pace and with an intensity of purpose unlike anything which had gone before: 'the machine ... overnight acquired one or two new gears, capable of far higher speeds than had ever been thought possible'.⁹⁷ Under Churchill, the apparatus of government and the strength of the core executive were extemporarily reformed far beyond Lloyd George's system of 1916. This was the result of the Prime Minister's personality, in combination with more imaginative reforms in the machinery of government. While the former was not in the hands of War Book planners, the latter were. The measures outlined in the War Book

⁹² 3 September 1939 in N.J. Crowson (ed.), *Fleet Street, Press Barons and Politics: The Journals of Collin Brooks, 1932-1940* (London, Royal Historical Society, 1998), 253-254.

⁹³ Bodleian, MS. Simon 11, 7 October 1939; William Beveridge, *Power and Influence* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1953), 270.

⁹⁴ TNA, PREM/1/384, Bridges to Wilson, 3 September 1939; Yates to Rucker, 3 September 1939; Wilson to Bridges, 4 September 1939.

⁹⁵ John Colville, *Footprints in Time* (London: Collins, 1976), 71-72.

⁹⁶ Colville, *Footprints in Time*, 75-76.

⁹⁷ 'Memoirs by Lord Bridges' in *Action This Day: Working with Churchill*, edited by John Wheeler-Bennett (London: Macmillan, 1968), 224-233 (220).

were important – and even with Chamberlain’s deviation, far better than the situation in 1914.

However, there was one clear failing in preparations. Despite their own warnings, contingency planners suffered from hubris and over-confidence. They took too much comfort in the past. They were united in the belief that they could map the experience of the ‘supreme control’ during the First World War directly onto a second total war without further innovation. Confident that they had discovered the perfect state of administration, officials did not countenance altering the system beyond that established in 1916. It was therefore once more necessary to improvise during war, at one of the most acute moments of crisis. Such was the danger of looking only to the lessons of the past rather than simultaneously casting minds forward.

Civil Defence Planning

Civil Defence planning, designed to protect the population from enemy attacks such as strategic bombing, was integral to War Book preparations. Air Raid Precautions (ARP) were a form of passive defence against air attack, stemming from the pervasive fear that active defences were imperfect and so the bomber would always get through.⁹⁸ The War Book of 1914 had omitted provisions for civil defence and so the response to Zeppelin raids had been improvised, largely by Arthur Dixon, an Assistant Secretary in the Home Office who became the greatest authority on coordinating the emergency services. The experience of raids during the First World War demonstrated the vulnerability of the civilian population and the importance of ‘proper organisation and protection’.⁹⁹ The addition of civilian defence to the War Book was one of the key recommendations in post-war stocktaking.¹⁰⁰ However, little could be learned from the First World War as attacks had been so limited and air power developed so rapidly in the interwar period. Bearing in mind the danger that to ‘be too futurist is as dangerous as to be archaic’, contingency planners therefore had to ‘marry the lessons of the past to a future hypothetical experience’.¹⁰¹ In contrast to the question of the ‘supreme control’

⁹⁸ Hansard, House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series, vol. 270, c. 632, 10 November 1932; CUL, Baldwin 1/106-107, Londonderry to Baldwin, 17 July 1934.

⁹⁹ CAC, HDSL/4/11, ‘Early Bombing Experiences (1914-1918) and their Lessons’.

¹⁰⁰ TNA, CAB/15/6/18, ‘Home Office Memorandum on the Revision of the War Book’, June 1919.

¹⁰¹ TNA, CAB/21/573, Hankey to Baldwin, 15 January 1936; Terence O’Brien, *Civil Defence* (London: HMSO, 1955), 4-5.

officials engaged in civil defence planning frequently looked beyond the lessons of war and were more imaginative; they also sought to learn from German and French defence preparations and harnessed their experiences of planning for contingencies such as strikes.¹⁰²

Much of the work on civil defence in the interwar years was sluggish and hampered by obstructions yet owed much to the work of one particular senior official. The burden of planning in the 1920s fell largely on John Anderson's shoulders, although the detail of schemes was usually elucidated by juniors within the Home Office, including Frank Newsam and Norman Brook, two future Permanent Secretaries who both supported post-Second World War contingency planning. Indeed, civil defence issues defined Anderson's career, first as Permanent Under-Secretary at the Home Office, a position which was the gateway to his later ministerial career as Lord Privy Seal, Home Secretary, and Minister of Home Security. Anderson was one of the most skilled administrators to inhabit Whitehall and, contrary to his biographer's claim that the Permanent Under-Secretary was only interested in administration, his work on ARP demonstrated his keen interest in the issues under study, as well.¹⁰³ Moreover, Anderson's efforts in contingency planning were not limited to war: he played an important role in planning for the General Strike of May 1926, leading an interdepartmental committee to prepare emergency transport and supply systems.¹⁰⁴ Between 1922 and his departure from the Home Office in 1932, Anderson brought his talents to bear on wartime preparations. He identified those who were more expert in their fields and empowered them to reform the machinery as required, such as Arthur Dixon, who used the knowledge he had accumulated during the First World War to improve the coordination and effectiveness of the emergency services.¹⁰⁵ He also chaired the ARP Sub-Committee, which became the central coordinating body for ARP preparations, and was responsible both for devising broad principles and translating these into detailed plans. An authoritative Chairman, Anderson handled the ARP Sub-Committee with great skill and was methodical in examining a range of issues, including shelters, poison gas, evacuation, lighting restrictions, warning signals, treating casualties, moving the seat of government, and repairing damage to infrastructure. Anderson's efforts in this sphere were crucial in laying the foundations of ARP schemes. However, the ARP Sub-Committee's consultations with experts in industry and

¹⁰² TNA, CAB/46/11, ARP(O) Committee.

¹⁰³ Wheeler-Bennett, *Waverley*, 85-86.

¹⁰⁴ Wheeler-Bennett, *Waverley*, 102-107.

¹⁰⁵ CAC, WELL/Acc. 115, Memoir.

infrastructure were hampered by the need for secrecy. Optimism for peace was another obstruction, particularly following the signing of the Locarno Agreements in 1925.

It became clear that planning could not operate independently of politics. Anderson was bold in repeatedly pressing for greater freedoms of inquiry and testing the limits of how far cautious ministers would permit schemes to be developed.¹⁰⁶ Anderson's activities to draw ministers more closely into preparations were accentuated by the formation in 1929 of the ARP (Policy) Committee, comprising ministers and Anderson. The ARP (Organisation) Committee, comprised of officials, submitted principles to ministers for decision. One such question was whether evacuation would be government policy, and if so, who was to be evacuated.¹⁰⁷ The ARP (Policy) Committee relied on Anderson for information; he conveyed his expertise and spoke at length and intended that ministers should provide the executive authority to permit more meaningful ARP progress. However, Anderson struggled to realise this attempt at derivative influence as politicians' timidity and inattention undercut his efforts.¹⁰⁸ On Anderson's departure from the Home Office, the torch passed to Robert Russell Scott, who was a more passive and less assertive and knowledgeable committee Chairman.¹⁰⁹ Thus, after over a decade, ARP planners had made satisfactory progress in examining the issues and collecting information, but not in detailed plans or schemes.¹¹⁰

The mid-1930s marked a change in tempo. The situation improved somewhat in 1935 – the year of the Abyssinian crisis, which became a major impetus to contingency planning.¹¹¹ It was only then that significantly wider freedoms were bestowed on planners, although certain sensitive consultations were still forbidden, as was educating the public. The creation in 1935 of an ARP Department to coordinate interdepartmental efforts and turn vague proposals into firm plans under the aegis of the Home Office did not greatly advance progress, either. Local Authorities were obstructive, finances were short, and civil defence planning remained 'political dynamite'.¹¹² Greater progress was

¹⁰⁶ TNA, CAB/3/4, 133A, John Anderson, 24 January 1925; CAB/3/5, 14 July 1927; CAB/46/4, ARP 57, 'Authority for Consultation and Cooperation', 27 May 1927.

¹⁰⁷ TNA, CAB/46/12, ARP(O) 132, 'Note by the Chairman', Anderson, 4 April 1932.

¹⁰⁸ TNA, CAB/2/5, 8 November 1932 and 6 April 1933.

¹⁰⁹ TNA, CAB/46/7-9 A.R.P. (Organisation) Committee minutes.

¹¹⁰ O'Brien, *Civil Defence*, 33-35.

¹¹¹ TNA, HO/144/21266, Bullock to Hankey, 19 December 1935; HO/144/21266, Hodsoll to Russell Scott, 14 March 1936; Hodsoll memorandum, 19 March 1936; Russell Scott to Secretary of State for Air, 19 March 1936; CAC, HDSL/4/39, Hodsoll to Russell Scott, 16 December 1935.

¹¹² CAC, ROSK/7/87, 'Notes on Disarmament and Re-Armament in the 1930s', Hodsoll; HDSL/4/15, Review of ARP Department Work, May 1936, Hodsoll; BRGS/1/1, Memoir, f. 36; Fisher, 'The Beginnings of Civil Defence', 214.

made in 1937 as international tensions mounted and the devastating aerial bombardments during the Spanish Civil War re-ignited anxieties. Preparations were made to convert the basement of the Office of Works into the reinforced seat of government; it ultimately grew into a sprawling subterranean network of tunnels and bedrooms, offices, map rooms, meeting rooms, and a mess, with a power station and water supply. The 'Hole in the Ground' became the 'nerve centre of British war direction' although the extent to which it would have afforded protection in case of a direct hit remains unclear.¹¹³ 1937 was also a highly important year because the Home Secretary, John Simon, drew attention to the cost of ARP arrangements and urged the Cabinet that the central government must offer financial assistance to Local Authorities to rapidly progress ARP schemes.¹¹⁴ The Sub-Committee on Air Raid Precautions Services (ARPS) sat from May 1937; Fisher, Hankey, Russell Scott, Bridges, Horace Wilson, and other senior officials examined the balance of responsibility between local and central government, and recommended that the Exchequer provide technical, administrative, and especially financial assistance to Local Authorities.¹¹⁵

Nevertheless, despite all these efforts spanning nearly two decades, civil defence preparations were at an embryonic stage by 1938, lacking in both coordination and detail.¹¹⁶ Pointing to the failings of sluggish and sclerotic bureaucracy, Fisher later correctly criticised that planning 'dragged on in a typically English amateurish fashion until a scare ... accelerated and methodised preparations'.¹¹⁷ In the atmosphere of acute tension following Germany's annexation of Austria in March 1938 and unrest in the Sudetenland, Hankey and Fisher collaborated to drive forward civil defence schemes. In a highly consequential joint memorandum, they recommended that the country should be divided into regional units under the charge of controllers, who were to be responsible to a Minister for Home Security.¹¹⁸ They emphasised that only limited lessons could be learned from past wars as aerial bombardment was 'inherently different from anything which it has hitherto been necessary to contemplate'; they therefore turned to other emergencies, namely the General Strike of 1926, to guide them. The transport and supply apparatus, as well as the lines of regional administration

¹¹³ James Leasor (ed.), *War at the Top: The Experiences of General Sir Leslie Hollis* (London: Joseph, 1959), 9.

¹¹⁴ TNA, CAB/16/141, D.P.R. 181, 'Financial Aspects of Air Raid Precautions', Simon, 23 March 1937.

¹¹⁵ TNA, CAB/16/172, ARPS meeting, 7 May; ARPS 15, 'Report', 30 June 1937; O'Brien, *Civil Defence*, 62; 95.

¹¹⁶ Liddell Hart Centre, ISMAY/1/14/66, Hodson to Ismay, 19 June 1958.

¹¹⁷ Fisher, 'The Beginnings of Civil Defence', 215.

¹¹⁸ TNA, CAB/3/7, 289A, 'The Coordination and Control of Passive Defence Measures in Time of War', Fisher and Hankey, 23 May 1938.

devised during the General Strike had long since been recognised as a valuable template for a range of emergencies, particularly by Anderson.¹¹⁹ Fisher's dedication to civil defence measures should not be under-estimated. Following his retirement as Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, he secured the appointment of Regional Commissioner for the North-West. This was, however, a lesser role than he had anticipated and he was transferred to a job coordinating the restoration of bomb-damaged infrastructure in London. Here, his difficult temperament brought him into conflict with prominent politicians and he earned the reputation of being more of a hindrance than a help.¹²⁰

John Anderson's post-Whitehall career was more successful. It was also in the spring of 1938 that Anderson returned from his highly celebrated tenure as Governor of Bengal and successfully contested Ramsay MacDonald's vacant seat. Fresh from his transformation from mandarin to Member of Parliament, and with a towering reputation as 'the man who knows all about organisation', and who had laboured for a decade on civil defence issues, Anderson was called upon to chair the backbench Committee on Evacuation.¹²¹ Between May and July 1938, he poured his expertise and energy into proceedings, and the committee's recommendations became the key elements in the evacuation scheme eventually instituted in September 1939. Home Office staff worked furiously to translate these recommendations into schemes and completely revised the 'obsolete' War Book in the summer of 1938.¹²² However, as plans were still incomplete at the time of the Munich crisis, the Coordination Committee reanimated the Civil Emergency Organisation which had been so successful during the General Strike and renamed it 'Scheme Y'.¹²³ It was in September 1938 that Anderson was promoted from the backbenches to Minister of Home Security, with executive responsibility for overseeing the ARP Department.¹²⁴ Following the Munich crisis, there was a thorough overhaul of civil defence procedures and machinery; it was decided, for example, that greater responsibility should be given to the Ministry of Health and Board

¹¹⁹ TNA, CAB/46/2, 31 May 1926; Wheeler-Bennett, *Waverley*, 102-107.

¹²⁰ TNA, HO/186/1196, 'Sir Warren Fisher's Organisation', 18 March 1941; Eunan O'Halpin, *Head of the Civil Service: A Study of Sir Warren Fisher* (London: Routledge, 1989), 205; 275-276.

¹²¹ 28 January 1939 in Robert Self (ed.), *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters, Volume 4. The Downing Street Years, 1934-1940* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 375-377.

¹²² TNA, CAB/2/8, 15 September 1938; CAB/15/1, 1415B, Coordination Committee, Twentieth Report, 17 June 1938; Richard Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy* (London: HMSO, 1950), 28-29.

¹²³ TNA, CAB/15/1, K-26, 23 September 1938.

¹²⁴ TNA, CAB/3/7, 297A, 'Home Security Organisation', Chamberlain, 26 September 1938.

of Education in evacuation matters.¹²⁵ It was also agreed that 'Scheme Y' – a short-term expedient – was to be included in the War Book as an integral part of civil defence.¹²⁶

One of the most important consequences of the Munich crisis was Anderson's further promotion to Lord Privy Seal. He found his new ministerial career a 'depressing prospect', but his sense of duty prevailed.¹²⁷ In his new roles, Anderson excelled, marrying the experience of an expert civil servant with the executive authority of a minister.¹²⁸ Gathering around him a very capable coterie of officials, including Norman Brook, Anderson transformed the ARP Department and oversaw the development of nebulous plans into detailed schemes. He coordinated civil defence, particularly by facilitating interdepartmental cooperation, and devolved responsibility to the necessary departments and authorities.¹²⁹ Despite the progress made between the Munich crisis and the summer of 1939, the pace of planning was feverish as war approached in 1939. A plethora of last-minute adaptations and changes were made to schemes.¹³⁰ By September 1939, an elaborate air raid defence scheme had been created, with wardens, firemen, rescuers, messengers, ambulances, and a complex but efficient system of organisation with local, regional, and national layers. Telegrams to the police, fire brigades, ARP Controllers and Regional Commissioners had been pre-drafted and kept ready for despatch; there were over 200 batches of orders, some numbering up to 185 copies.¹³¹

The success of civil defence planning remains contested. Certain preparations were still in progress at the outbreak of war, including shelter provision. The 'Meccano style shelter' for small householders - sponsored by Anderson - were distributed throughout 1939, although without the reprieve offered by the Phoney War, the delay in the fulfilment of shelter orders would have proved disastrous.¹³² Quite apart from delays and omissions, there were also difficulties implementing and operating civil defence schemes, including confusion over evacuation orders.¹³³ In considering the

¹²⁵ TNA, HO/144/21266, Bunker to Gwynn, 13 March 1939; CAB/3/8, 301A, 'Report of Conference', 12 November 1938.

¹²⁶ TNA, CAB/15/1, K27, 18 March 1939.

¹²⁷ BL, MSS Eur F 207/34, 30 October 1938.

¹²⁸ For instance, TNA, CAB/2/8, 22 December 1938.

¹²⁹ O'Brien, *Civil Defence*, 166-173; CAC, WELL/Acc. 115, Memoir; Edward Bridges, 'John Anderson, Viscount Waverley, 1882-1958', *Biographical Memoirs of Fellow of the Royal Society*, 4 (1958), 306-325 (313).

¹³⁰ Ismay, *Memoirs*, 95; TNA, CAB/15/1, K27, 18 March 1939.

¹³¹ CAC, WELL/Acc. 115, Memoir.

¹³² Wheeler-Bennett, *Waverley*, 221-223; Mackay, *Half the Battle*, 35.

¹³³ TNA, HO/45/19760, Anderson to Brook, 30 August; 'Evacuation', Brook; Wilson to Anderson, 31 August 1939.

question of success, what is perhaps most striking is the extent to which senior mandarins doubted the efficacy of defences they had devised: one even expected bomb shelters to flood on the first day of war and drown the ruling elite.¹³⁴ Others, including Churchill, whose intrepid spirit arguably set him apart from his colleagues, felt that a 'wholly fallacious view of the degree of danger' had gripped Whitehall.¹³⁵ Yet preparations were more successful than had officials not engaged in planning. This was arguably clearest in the role of shelters and emergency services during air raids. Undoubtedly, more could and should have been done, including the provision of deep, communal shelters. It was this issue which generated a strong public backlash against Anderson's record in government.¹³⁶ Anderson remained at the Home Office as the political captain of a department which he had superintended for a decade as an elite official until October 1940. Promoted to Lord President of the Council and, subsequently, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Anderson's contributions to civil defence, the home front, and the wider war effort were almost unparalleled.

Throughout the interwar years, Permanent Secretaries played an important role in devising principles of civil defence, investigating schemes, and pressing for greater progress. Senior officials made generative contributions to ARP schemes in different dimensions, from financial arrangements to regional administration. However, cast in terms of constructive influence to devise machinery and effect change, elite mandarins enjoyed limited success. Political opinion was a significant obstruction, pointing to the inseparability of administration and politics, even in hypothetical matters of the apparatus of government which are sometimes wrongly assumed to be the sole preserve of mandarins.¹³⁷ Even more striking is the extent to which sluggish progress was often the result of internal difficulties within Whitehall, perhaps pointing to a failing competency at the heart of the state.

¹³⁴ CAC, WELL/Acc. 115, Memoir.

¹³⁵ Winston Churchill, *The Second World War. Volume I: The Gathering Storm* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948), 438-439.

¹³⁶ Wheeler-Bennett, *Waverley*, 239-253.

¹³⁷ Harold Edward Dale, *The Higher Civil Service of Great Britain* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), x-xi.

Conclusion: Beyond 1939

Copies of the War Book were entrusted to Chief Constables in leafy Devon and Pembrokeshire for safekeeping in the winter of 1940, because: 'If and when the present war comes to an end, we – or our successors – will ... have to do the same thing again, and it would be rather a tragedy if they had to start from scratch'.¹³⁸ This demonstrated the belief that the War Book was an immensely valuable store of institutional memory and that contingency planning was both necessary and beneficial. In preserving and subsequently revising the volume, officials wove a culture of contingency planning into the fabric of the British state and into the consciousness of future generations. The War Book returned to Whitehall in 1944. Throughout the late 1940s, planners attempted to distil the lessons of the Second World War, while also adapting measures to new developments, such as the nuclear age, modern communications, the creation of new departments and obligations arising from Britain's membership of the United Nations.¹³⁹ Official Histories of the Second World War were another means by which civil servants reflected on and distilled the lessons of the past.¹⁴⁰ Edward Bridges was a great supporter of the Official Histories, and from 1939, requested that departments collect material and record experiences for such a project. A start was made on the volumes in 1941.¹⁴¹ Taking the form of internal histories, written by outsiders who gleaned their information from insiders and confidential material, the Official Histories were originally designed to 'fund experience for Government use'. In this way, the volumes were intended to be critical and to reveal trials and errors, as it would be futile and dangerous to tell only the stories of success.¹⁴² Norman Brook agreed that the past must not be whitewashed if future governments were to learn from mistakes.¹⁴³ It was eventually decided to publish the Official Histories and they formed the backbone of the first wave of historical scholarship on the Second World War. They were of a lamentably

¹³⁸ TNA, HO/45/19760/700050, Wells to Morris and Evans, 20 February 1940.

¹³⁹ For thinking on the atomic bomb, see CAC, ACAD/1/15, 10 August 1945; TNA, CAB/175/9, 'Government War Book', November 1948; HO/205/374, Home Office War Book memorandum, July 1950.

¹⁴⁰ Their utility as such had long since been recognised; Robert Horne in Hansard, House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series, vol. 155, col. 283, 13 June 1922. For a study of the Civil History series and the work of W.K. Hancock, see Jose Harris, 'If Britain had been defeated by the Nazis, how would history have been written?', in *Still More Adventures with Britannia: Personalities, Politics and Culture*, edited by William Roger Louis (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 211-228.

¹⁴¹ Richard Chapman, *Ethics in the British Civil Service* (London: Routledge, 1988), 26-231; TNA, CAB/21/1084, 'Functions of the Cabinet Secretariat', Bridges, 14 September 1944.

¹⁴² Hancock and Gowing, *British War Economy*. xi.

¹⁴³ Margaret Macmillan, *The Uses and Abuses of History* (London: Profile Books, 2010 edition), 40-41.

mixed quality, hindered by the limitations of oral history, the removal of sensitive information, and proximity to both people and events.

This chapter has demonstrated that senior officials in the first half of the twentieth century shared a dominant mindset. They regarded the world they inhabited with anxiety and pessimism; they thus sought to harness the power of organisation and learn from the past to gain advantage in times of crisis and to mitigate against what they perceived to be Britain's weaknesses. Officials had simultaneously to glance in the rear-view mirror, to adapt to contemporary transformations, and to engage in a spot of crystal ball gazing. This was done within a climate of distractions, political obstruction, and bureaucratic inertia. To a considerable extent, they succeeded, helped in no small part by the blessing that appeared in the form of the Munich crisis. A far greater experiment in government control than the First World War, the Second World War marked a watershed in the role of the state, beyond that which had been envisioned by planners.¹⁴⁴ The apparatus devised by senior officials was not fool proof and was extensive without being exhaustive. There were omissions and weaknesses, many of which generated widespread anger directed towards senior mandarins, who were perceived as being responsible for the 'almost unbelievable inefficiency' in preparing for war.¹⁴⁵ Despite the many successes of the War Book project, such criticisms were justified. In a striking reflection on the lessons of the Second World War, Richard Hopkins acknowledged the limitations of pre-war planning, particularly in the economic sphere, yet he asserted that the architects of the War Book planned around what was deemed to be both necessary and feasible. Forecasts of how willingly the British public would tolerate the expansion of state control were unfavourable, and officials were subsequently shocked to discover considerable goodwill towards schemes such as rationing and industrial controls during the war.¹⁴⁶

This chapter has also reflected on the extent to which senior officials could reform the machinery of government to better understand their influence in the administrative dimension. It has demonstrated the considerable extent to which mandarins possessed the agency to *devise* reforms and, at the same time, the need to co-

¹⁴⁴ Hugh Pemberton, 'The Civil Service' in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern British Political History*, edited by David Brown, Robert Crowcroft, and Gordon Pentland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 121-136 (128).

¹⁴⁵ For example, 24 May 1940 in Charles Stuart (ed.), *The Reith Diaries* (London: Collins, 1975), 254.

¹⁴⁶ 'Introductory Note', Richard Hopkins in D.N. Chester, *Lessons of the British War Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 1-4 (2).

opt ministers into schemes to successfully *implement* them. Indeed, the chapter illuminates the interdependency between administrative reform and the political climate, and thus suggests that mandarins possessed less constructive influence in administrative matters than might be assumed.

Chapter Six: Exit Stage Left?

*All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts.¹*

There came a time when the curtain fell on Permanent Secretaries. Successors rose and stepped into their shoes. The only certainty in the career of an elite official was that he would one day cease to occupy his position at the apex of a great department. One evening, he would close his files, switch off the lights, and stride for the last time from his grand office, leaving behind the life of officialdom which had governed his existence for decades. It is upon senior mandarins' departures from Whitehall, and the lives they led in retirement, that this chapter focuses.

Regrettably, biographers have treated this period in their subjects' lives with brief chapters, sometimes titled as epilogues – though more accurately described as afterthoughts.² With their greying subjects liberated from the trappings of Whitehall, and centring on unpalatable themes of decline, demise, and death, biographers either become overly wistful or appear to lose interest. Yet the implication that an official's life beyond Whitehall hardly merits study is a mistake and a misperception. Moreover, biographers have often ignored the fundamental interconnectedness of these ex-mandarins' existences, even when the bonds of officialdom no longer bound them. They continued to inhabit many of the same spaces, from clubland to the House of Lords; they were exposed to many of the same opportunities, from lucrative directorships to publishing contracts; and they experienced the same events, not least immense political upheavals, from the same location. Their whole lives were interwoven. Time and time again, ex-officials interacted within 'old boys' networks. Collective biography is thus vital in rethinking post-Whitehall lives. It facilitates the necessary shift from linear narratives centring on a single individual to instead illuminate the themes, patterns, and

¹ William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, edited by Cynthia Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004 edition), Act II, Scene VII, 165.

² John Wheeler-Bennett's *Waverley* is a notable exception because of Anderson's unusual career, in which he was not an official for the last three decades of his life.

trends in the paths that led away from the highest posts in the Civil Service. How individuals' pathways were similar, and how they were different, speaks to dominant institutional and generational cultures. Kevin Theakston's study of former Prime Ministers offers a practical example of tracing the pathways which led from the corridors of power.³

This chapter is founded on four lines of enquiry. Each sheds light on the later lives of these individuals, reveals group cultures, and underscores the importance of studying mandarins in retirement. The first investigates the manner in which Permanent Secretaries departed from the Civil Service. It asks whether this was an orderly 'exit stage left', written into the internal rhythms of the script, or whether it was perhaps a little messier than the chroniclers and inhabitants of Whitehall wished outsiders to believe. The first chapter has already demonstrated the extent of political involvement in mandarins' promotions. This section considers the corollary by assessing whether ministers could remove Permanent Secretaries who they disliked, or with whom they disagreed. The second, third, and fourth lines of enquiry centre on the future which awaited ex-mandarins after they had passed the keys to their offices to their successors. The second section probes how ex-civil servants frequently reinvented themselves in new roles and re-emerged onto the public stage. A dominant thread running through the third and fourth sections is the lingering bad taste of appeasement and how the battles of the 1930s haunted the Whitehall elite into the 1950s. The third section focuses on memory and mythmaking. Codes governed what could and should be said by civil servants, although not all conformed to this stifling culture. In assisting historians with research and in publishing their own memoirs, many ex-officials made significant contributions to historiography. History was personal to these individuals: it was their lives and legacies. History also became a site of conflict as memory was contested. Finally, the fourth section centres on the Suez crisis, a painful and traumatic experience for the generation which had fought so vigorously to maintain British power, from the turn of the century to the early Cold War. During the protracted Suez crisis, networks of ex-officials sought to utilise their public roles to exercise derivative influence over foreign policy-making. The Suez crisis marked the end of an era in more ways than one. As well as a shocking demonstration of the limits of British power in the Cold War, the crisis marked the end of a generation.

³ Kevin Theakston, *After Number 10: Former Prime Ministers in British Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

The Fall

It was a truth universally acknowledged that the Civil Service was a relatively safe profession.⁴ Integral to the Civil Service's function as a permanent and apolitical army of mandarins was the principle that officials were not dismissed from their posts, except in the rare and extreme cases of criminality, corruption, or gross negligence.⁵ Even then, as the case of Christopher Bullock demonstrated, dismissal was fraught with difficulties. Thus, shielded from changing political winds and the whims of their ministerial masters, civil servants were free to operate without fear of punishment or dismissal. This constitutes what might be termed the 'official narrative' – a refrain repeated by ministers and mandarins alike, and consequently embedded into the fabric of British political life.⁶ While this comforting narrative is, to a considerable extent, an authentic representation of the workings of Whitehall, a more detailed study of both trends and exceptions alters and nuances understanding. The Civil Service was apolitical in the party-political sense, and it was permanent in that officials were not swept aside with each election. However, mandarins depended on politicians to maintain their posts and there were ways in which ministers could isolate or transfer elite civil servants who were not to their liking. Permanent Secretaries were not, therefore, quite so safely ensconced in their grand offices as they appeared.

Civil servants were pensionable from their 60th birthday, and while resignation was not mandatory at 60, special permission had to be obtained for those serving beyond the age of 65.⁷ Alexander Maxwell, who retired in 1948 aged 69, was the only elite official who retained the post of Permanent Under-Secretary beyond 65. Akin to other professions, many elite officials retired on or around their 60th birthdays. Robert Russell Scott, who retired in 1938 at the age of 60 without fuss or controversy, fits this model. Moreover, exits were often timed so as not to coincide with the comings and goings of ministers for continuity reasons, or else timed to take advantage of opportunities arising beyond Whitehall. For instance, by Hankey's 60th birthday, he had grown 'rather tired' of the 'exacting job', although at Neville Chamberlain's request, he

⁴ Richard Chapman, *Ethics in the British Civil Service* (London: Routledge, 1988), 34; TNA, T/169/16, Scott's Evidence to Tomlin Commission, 11 and 12 November 1929.

⁵ Bodleian, MS. Eng. misc. c. 489, Brook's lecture to Imperial Defence College, 23 March 1960.

⁶ For example, Herbert Morrison, *Government and Parliament: A Survey from the Inside* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 324-325.

⁷ TNA, T/162/284, Meeting, 11 May 1932; CAC, ROSK/7/90, Note by Bridges, 3 December 1968.

remained at the Cabinet Office for a further year.⁸ Hankey cast around for lucrative opportunities and finally retired in the summer of 1938 when one arose. Similarly, Richard Hopkins served beyond his 60th birthday at the express request of the Prime Minister. Aged 62 at the time of his appointment as Permanent Secretary, Hopkins agreed to captain the Treasury and British economy through the tumult of the Second World War; he was permitted to retire in February 1945 on his 65th birthday. Hopkins's successor, Edward Bridges, also discovered that the decision to retire was not his own. Cabinet Secretary from 1938 to 1947, and subsequently Permanent Secretary to the Treasury from 1945, Bridges suffered from strain and ill health and hoped to retire on his 60th birthday in 1952. These hopes were scuppered when Winston Churchill insisted that Bridges must remain in office.⁹ Although a great compliment to Bridges's talents and a testament to the respect he inspired, Churchill's directive created a situation whereby Bridges struggled on in ill health for a further five years. He was eventually permitted to retire in December 1956, aged 64.¹⁰

Only three officials departed from their posts prior to their 60th birthdays. The cases of Ronald Lindsay and Robert Vansittart will be examined shortly. The third was John Anderson, a man who broke the mould in almost every way, and who renounced the post of Permanent Under-Secretary a decade before his 60th birthday to become Governor of Bengal. Writing to his father, Anderson explained his motivations for dispensing with the security and prestige of his office.¹¹ Although flattered to have been chosen for the eminent post of Governor of Bengal to which no civil servant had ever been appointed, Anderson was not immediately attracted to such an onerous charge in a far-away land where affairs were in a sorry state. However, Anderson reflected on his life and explained that having 'reached the climax of my career here' at the Home Office 'ten years ago ... I don't very much fancy doing the same job for twenty years'. Veins of discontent, frustration, and boredom thus propelled Anderson to abandon one of the most glittering posts within the Civil Service.

These human emotions should not be overlooked. The Whitehall elite did not always perceive their lives and work to be exciting or interesting, while the demanding nature of their posts took a heavy toll on their health, particularly as they grew older. Just as in every profession, senior mandarins were often eager to escape decades of

⁸ CAC, HNKY/3/42, Hankey to Robin, 4 April, 14 April, and 21 October 1937.

⁹ TNA, T/273/74, Churchill to Bridges, October 1951.

¹⁰ TNA, T/268/21, Office Notices, 23 July and 7 December 1956.

¹¹ BL, MSS Eur F 207/28, Anderson to father, 21 November 1931.

tiring and tiresome work. To Ivone Kirkpatrick (Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office, 1953-1957) retirement was like 'dying' and he felt it a 'wrench' to leave behind the world where he had spent his whole life.¹² In contrast, his predecessor, William Strang described retirement as the happiest day of his life.¹³ After the fatigue and strain of a difficult job, Strang recounted the joy of breaking free from a lifetime of servitude and regaining independence of mind and opinion. Similarly, Hankey basked in a life of retirement 'without the curse of a daily bag from the office containing masses of reading ... and a load of cares and problems ... I am enjoying life ... I have not felt a single pang of regret'.¹⁴

Just like Anderson and Hankey, Alexander Cadogan longed to be set free. Cadogan's voluminous diaries offer unparalleled insight into how thoroughly the arch-mandarin disliked his profession. A lifelong malcontent, Cadogan soon grew dispirited with the draining and difficult work of a Permanent Under-Secretary.¹⁵ In 1940, he supported proposals to lower the age of retirement to 55, and by 1941, was itching to leave the Foreign Office.¹⁶ Despite privately confessing that he was 'stale' and that the job was too wearing, Cadogan accepted his minister's request to remain in office beyond his 60th birthday in November 1944 to meet the exigencies of war.¹⁷ The arrival of the new Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, in the summer of 1945 reinvigorated Cadogan's hopes of being set free from the 'state of slavery' and the 'grind'. Although disappointed to discover that Bevin did not wish to 'swop 'orses' at once, Cadogan was relieved to be dispatched to New York as Britain's permanent representative to the UN in 1946.¹⁸

While strain was a recurrent theme in the lives of the Whitehall elite, it was Eyre Crowe who suffered most. Crowe neither resigned nor retired: he died in office in April 1925, instantly cementing his legacy. The narrative that Crowe selflessly devoted his life to the Civil Service and worked himself to death surely appealed to civil servants who themselves felt overworked by more slovenly ministers.¹⁹ Crowe suffered from chronic ill-health and was rarely allowed respite from the heavy demands of post-war

¹² Ivone Kirkpatrick, *The Inner Circle: Memoirs of Ivone Kirkpatrick* (London: Macmillan, 1959), 269.

¹³ Lord Strang, *Home and Abroad* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1956), 301-304.

¹⁴ CAC, HNKY/3/43, Hankey to Robin, 12 August 1938.

¹⁵ For example, CAC, ACAD/1/1, 17 November 1933; ACAD/3/9, Cadogan to Theo, 10 March 1934.

¹⁶ CAC, ACAD/1/9, 13 December 1940; ACAD 1/10, 9 May 1941.

¹⁷ CAC, ACAD/1/13, 10 March, 21 March and 25 November 1944.

¹⁸ CAC, ACAD/1/16, 16 Jan 1946; ACAD/1/17, 23 January and 24 January 1946.

¹⁹ J.D. Gregory, *On the Edge of Diplomacy: Rambles and Reflections, 1902-1928* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1928), 255.

diplomacy by the imperious and exacting Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon.²⁰ Even when Crowe was permitted rest, Curzon would ring, demanding to be advised on '1001 matters ... which are enough to absorb 22 out of every 24 hours for a whole week!'²¹

Crowe and Cadogan were the exceptions to the apparent rule that Permanent Under-Secretaries of the Foreign Office would depart under a cloud. There was a strong tradition that senior officials in the department would finish their careers as ambassadors at the most prestigious embassies after long, difficult years in London.²² However, an examination of the motivations for 'promoting' Lord Hardinge, William Tyrrell, and Ronald Lindsay suggests that this 'tradition' served as a helpful chute for ministers wishing to dispose of problematic or unwieldy officials. Hardinge was politely 'kicked upstairs' to Paris in 1920 by Curzon and David Lloyd George.²³ Tyrrell's chronic alcoholism and scandals within the department, including the Francs affair, earned him an identical fate in 1928.²⁴ Tyrrell's successor, Ronald Lindsay, was a reluctant Permanent Under-Secretary.²⁵ Tensions between the Prime Minister (Ramsay MacDonald) and his Foreign Secretary (Arthur Henderson) over the control and direction of foreign policy were complicated by a parallel struggle between Henderson and Ronald Lindsay.²⁶ Reshuffling the Cabinet to remove Henderson from the Foreign Office was untenable given his political capital; instead, the Civil Service underwent a reshuffle to accommodate political tensions and Lindsay was transferred across the Atlantic to Washington in 1929. These were not isolated cases and the same trick of demotion by promotion was witnessed in the case of Robert Vansittart.

The end of Vansittart's tenure as Permanent Under-Secretary has been the subject of intense interest, although the profusion of reminiscences and scholarship heavily coloured by rumour has often obscured the events of his fall. It is wrong, for

²⁰ CAC, BLND/9/2, Bland to mother, 7 August 1923; Neville Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 25 April 1925 in Robert Self (ed.), *The Austen Chamberlain Diary Letters, 1916-1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 275; Kirkpatrick, *Inner Circle*, 32-33; Owen O'Malley, *The Phantom Caravan* (London: John Murray, 1954), 59-60.

²¹ CAC, BLND/9/2, Crowe to Bland, 26 September 1923.

²² Strang, *Home and Abroad*, 305-306.

²³ Lord Hardinge, *Old Diplomacy: The Reminiscences of Lord Hardinge of Penshurst* (London: John Murray, 1947), 250.

²⁴ 17 July 1929 in Kenneth Young (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, Volume I: 1915-1938* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 97-98; NLS, Acc. 9769/97/10, Crawford to Lindsay, 25 January 1928.

²⁵ NLS, Acc. 9769, Lindsay, 'Sic Fatur Nuntius', 1941, f. 147; 29 June and 4 November 1929 in Ben Pimlott (ed.), *The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton, 1918-40, 1945-60* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1986), 59; 71; CRL, AC/55/314-315, correspondence with Lindsay, 17 June 1929.

²⁶ David Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1977), 489-491; 29 June 1929 in Pimlott (ed.), *Dalton Diary*, 59.

instance, to emphasise any role played by Horace Wilson, despite the bad blood between them.²⁷ Shortly after becoming Foreign Secretary in December 1935, Eden decided to remove Vansittart. Vansittart had been tainted by the failures of the Abyssinian crisis and, after a suitable period, it was widely believed even amongst allies including Hankey and Fisher, that Vansittart should be moved on. Eden was dissatisfied with both the form and content of Vansittart's increasingly shrill and long-winded warnings on the dangers of negotiating with dictators which at the same time failed to offer a constructive alternative.²⁸ Eden also sought a less stubborn and more deferential official; he particularly resented Vansittart's standing and wished to monopolise influence over foreign policy.²⁹

In September 1936, Eden failed to convince Vansittart to accept 'promotion' to the Paris Embassy. Vansittart refused to accept the gilded post, no longer one of 'any real influence'. Referring to his outspoken opposition to appeasement, Vansittart also stressed that 'it would be so exactly what the Germans wanted, that consequently it would create the wrong impression in France'.³⁰ Vansittart's refusal indicates a sense of security in his position. However, Eden tried again in December 1936, this time strengthening his hand by incorporating the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, into his schemes.³¹ Vansittart once more refused the post. In a polite but firm letter, Vansittart conjured a trump card, reminding Baldwin of how loyally he had served. This personal appeal succeeded.³² Frustrated, Eden bade his time until the arrival of a more active Prime Minister.³³ Indeed, even before Neville Chamberlain had succeeded Baldwin in May 1937, Chamberlain and Eden conspired and concurred on the necessity of replacing

²⁷ TNA, CAB/127/158, Wilson on Munich, October 1941; 21 February 1941 in Ben Pimlott (ed.), *The Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton, 1940-1945* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1986), 163-164.

²⁸ Anthony Eden, *Facing the Dictators* (London: Cassell, 1962), 521; CAC, ACAD/4/5, Eden to Cadogan, 11 December 1961; Norman Rose, *Vansittart: Study of a Diplomat* (London: Heinemann, 1978), 152; CRL, AP/20/1/17, 6 January - 7 February 1937.

²⁹ Keith Neilson and T.G. Otte, *The Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1854-1946* (London: Routledge, 2009), 227-238; Andrew Roberts, *"The Holy Fox": A Biography of Lord Halifax* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), 81-82; Michael L. Roi, *Alternative to Appeasement: Sir Robert Vansittart and Alliance Diplomacy, 1934-1937* (Westport: Praeger, 1997), 118-119; Donald Graeme Boadle, 'Sir Robert Vansittart at the Foreign Office, 1930-1938', (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1980), 205; Ian Colvin, *Vansittart in Office: An Historical Survey on the Origins of the Second World War Based on the Papers of Sir Robert Vansittart* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1965), 148; D.R. Thorpe, *Eden: The Life and Times of Anthony Eden, First Earl of Avon, 1897-1977* (London: Pimlico, 2004), 195; CAC, ACAD/1/3 - ACAD/1/6.

³⁰ CRL, AP/14/1/631, Vansittart to Eden, 14 September 1936.

³¹ CRL, AP/20/1/16, 21 and 22 December 1936; AP/14/1/641B, Eden to Baldwin, 5 January 1937.

³² CUL, Baldwin 171/326, Vansittart to Baldwin, 30 December 1936.

³³ 7 March 1937 in John Harvey (ed.), *The Diplomatic Diaries of Oliver Harvey, 1937-1940* (London: Collins, 1970), 22-23.

Vansittart; Chamberlain was strongly opposed to what he perceived as Vansittart's obstructionism in the pursuit of appeasement and wished to make the Foreign Office a more pliable instrument.³⁴ Simultaneously, Fisher and Wilson attempted in vain to encourage Vansittart to accept a 'promotion', and even Hankey was made aware of the schemes afoot to unseat Vansittart.³⁵ Eden and Chamberlain finally succeeded in December 1937. On 7 December, Chamberlain informed Eden that Vansittart was to be 'kicked upstairs' to the new and vacuous position of Chief Diplomatic Advisor.³⁶ Presented with a *fait accompli*, Vansittart chose to accept his fate rather than resign. He tried in vain to retain control of intelligence work to keep the most important controls in his own hands and thus mitigate the worst effects of his demotion.³⁷ Chamberlain crowed that after months 'wasted in futile attempts to push Van out of the F.O. it is amusing ... that I have done it in 3 days ... I did not give him an alternative!'³⁸ Despite the Foreign Office's favourable press releases, Vansittart's 'promotion' was widely recognised as a snub.³⁹ His subsequent attempts to assert himself in policymaking achieved only limited success and Vansittart grew profoundly depressed in his isolating, impotent position.⁴⁰ In an attempt to save face, Vansittart later claimed that Chamberlain – and all Prime Ministers – were entitled to be 'served by whom they will'.⁴¹

It was not only elite officials in the Foreign Office who found themselves isolated by ministers. Two successive Permanent Secretaries to the Treasury – Warren Fisher and Horace Wilson – departed under clouds after losing the confidence of the Prime Minister. Like Vansittart, they were excluded, although they remained formally in their

³⁴ 4 May 1937 in Harvey (ed.), *Diplomatic Diaries*, 43-44; Neville Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 12 September and 24 October 1937 in Robert Self (ed.), *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters, Volume 4. The Downing Street Years, 1934-1940* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 269-270; 276-279; TNA, CAB/21/558, Hankey to Wilson, 4 November 1937.

³⁵ CAC, PHPP/1/3/3, Hankey to Phipps, 11 January 1938.

³⁶ 7 December 1937 in Harvey (ed.), *Diplomatic Diaries*, 63-64; CRL, AP/20/5/14, Eden to Chamberlain, 12 December 1937.

³⁷ CRL, AP/20/5/32, Vansittart to Eden, 9 December 1937.

³⁸ CRL, NC/18/1/1031, Neville Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 12 December 1937.

³⁹ *The Times*, 1 January 1938; *Daily Mail*, 1 January 1938; *The Manchester Guardian*, 1 January 1938; 4 January 1938 in Gabriel Gorodetsky, *The Maisky Diaries: Red Ambassador to the Court of St James's, 1932-1943*, translated by Tatiana Sorokina and Oliver Ready (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 98; CAC, VNST/II/6, *The Nation*, 'Behind Vansittart's Promotion', 22 January 1938.

⁴⁰ John R. Ferris, "Indulged in All Too Little?": Vansittart, Intelligence and Appeasement', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 6:1 (1995), 122-175; Rose, *Vansittart*, 208-229; 30 April 1940, W.P. Crozier, *Off the Record: Political Interviews, 1933-1943*. Edited with an Introduction by A.J.P. Taylor (London: Hutchinson, 1973), 161-164; 13 June 1940 in Pimlott (ed.), *Dalton Diary*, 38-39; 24 January 1940 in John Barnes and David Nicholson (eds), *The Empire at Bay: The Leo Amery Diaries, 1929-1945* (London: Hutchinson, 1988), 581-582; CAC, ACAD/1/6 – ACAD/1/10. For an example of Vansittart's exclusion, see TNA, FO/371/21736.

⁴¹ CUL, Templewood XVII/File 4, 'Ten Years After – A Munich Survey', Vansittart, BBC, 14 October 1948.

posts and retired upon reaching the age of 60. After long years as intimate friends and confidants, Fisher celebrated Neville Chamberlain's arrival at No. 10 Downing Street in 1937 as a great triumph. However, there were signs during 1937 and 1938 that Fisher's privileged position as the Prime Minister's right-hand man was waning as Chamberlain turned instead to Horace Wilson for advice and assistance. The decisive break came over policy in the autumn of 1938 when Fisher strongly opposed the Munich settlement.⁴² Communications between the two were henceforth funnelled via, and addressed to, Wilson. In one instance, Fisher was reduced to begging Wilson to show the note to the premier, having lost access to Chamberlain.⁴³ Fisher was thus reduced to Permanent Secretary to the Treasury in name only; sapped of access and influence, his position was untenable, even if he had wished to remain in office. Fisher had long-since looked forward to retirement after growing 'disgusted' with politicians' attitudes to rearmament and had always believed in the importance of retirement at 60 as part of Whitehall's cycle of renewal.⁴⁴ However, the circumstances of his departure demonstrate the extent to which a Prime Minister could exclude critical officials. In this unhappy, isolating situation and denuded of influence, Fisher wrote to Chamberlain in January 1939. In an uncharacteristically cold and impersonal chain of correspondence, Fisher restated his desire to retire in October upon reaching the age of 60.⁴⁵ Chamberlain accepted Fisher's wish and approved Fisher's request to take five months of accumulated leave prior to his retirement 'to shorten the transition period and facilitate the change-over'.⁴⁶ One contemporary correctly detected 'such obvious bitterness of feeling' and a 'considerable row' in Fisher's departure.⁴⁷

Munich wrecked Fisher's relationship with the Prime Minister and robbed him of the necessary access which underpinned his role; it had an identical impact on Horace Wilson, who learned that it was a mistake to become too closely associated with a particular minister or policy. By May 1939, Wilson had assumed the headship of the Treasury and the Civil Service, alongside his duties as Chamberlain's adviser, and was thus the most important mandarin in Britain. Wilson's role in the Munich negotiations

⁴² Eunan O'Halpin, *Head of the Civil Service: A Study of Sir Warren Fisher* (London: Routledge, 1989), 218-219; Fisher Papers, Fisher to Wilson, 17 September 1938 and Fisher to Chamberlain, 1 October 1938.

⁴³ Fisher Papers, Fisher to Wilson, 17 February 1939.

⁴⁴ 23 June 1936 in Charles Stuart (ed.), *The Reith Diaries* (London: Collins, 1975), 211.

⁴⁵ Fisher Papers, Fisher to Prime Minister, 17 January 1939.

⁴⁶ Fisher Papers, Prime Minister to Fisher, 17 January 1939; TNA, T/273/148, Fisher to Grigg, 15 November 1938.

⁴⁷ J.C.W. Reith, *Into the Wind* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1949), 340; 11 January, 16 March and 29 March 1939 in Stuart (ed.), *Reith Diaries*, 226-227; see also the bitter swansong in Fisher Papers, Fisher to Wilson, 15 March 1939.

and his close relationship with Chamberlain were taken as evidence of his association with appeasement and of a civil servant straining codes of proper behaviour. He became an easy target for critics, particularly following the failure of appeasement.⁴⁸ Moreover, ministers and fellow officials resented Wilson's position; Cadogan was almost alone in refusing to savage Wilson.⁴⁹ Most famously, 'Cato' attacked Wilson as the man 'behind the arras' who formulated policy and occupied 'a more powerful position than almost anyone else since Cardinal Wolsey'.⁵⁰ Historians continue to debate – albeit in a repetitive and one-dimensional manner – whether Wilson was a messenger, gatekeeper, distiller, sounding board, or more of a quasi-diplomat, usurper, and *éminence grise*. George Peden's interpretation of Wilson as an important, yet not omnipotent, official remains the most convincing.⁵¹ However, perception mattered more than reality.

Contemporaries across the political spectrum believed the 'Cato' narrative and sought to punish Wilson. The Labour leadership refused to join a coalition under Chamberlain on the outbreak of war and demanded, among other conditions, the elimination of Wilson's influence from government – arguably as much because of Wilson's work on industrial arbitration as foreign policy.⁵² The fall of Chamberlain in May 1940 and the rise of Churchill irrevocably transformed Wilson's position. He and Churchill shared a difficult relationship, dating back to Wilson's days at the Board of Trade.⁵³ The Labour leadership again named Wilson's removal as one of the prices of coalition, while Conservatives including Harold Macmillan and Eden were equally keen to see Wilson removed.⁵⁴ Churchill side-stepped the controversial decision to remove a civil servant: though permitted to retain his post as Permanent Secretary, Wilson was

⁴⁸ For instance, TNA, T/273/68, Bridges to Attlee, 5 November 1946; Beaverbrook quoted in Peter Hennessy, *Whitehall* (London: Fontana, 1990), 85; 29 August 1940 in Robert Rhodes James (ed.), *Chips: The Diaries of Sir Henry Channon* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), 264; 9 November 1940 in N.J. Crowson (ed.), *Fleet Street, Press Barons and Politics: The Journals of Collin Brooks, 1932-1940* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1998), 178; Hansard, House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series, vol. 341, cols. 1047-1049, 17 November 1938.

⁴⁹ For example, Eden, *Facing the Dictators*, especially 447-448; 556; 595; CAC, STRN/2/12, Strang to Eden, 25 September 1971. For Cadogan's remarks, see CAC, ACAD/1/7, 10 January and 27 January 1938; ACAD/4/5, Cadogan to Gilbert, 4 February 1962; CUL, Templewood XIX/File 12, Cadogan to Templewood, 26 October 1951.

⁵⁰ Cato, *Guilty Men* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1940), 86-90.

⁵¹ G.C. Peden 'Sir Horace Wilson and Appeasement', *The Historical Journal*, 53:4 (2010), 983-1014.

⁵² 6 September 1939 in Pimlott (ed.), *Dalton Diary*, 297.

⁵³ Addison Papers, Interview with Wilson, 4 April 1967; CUL, Windham Baldwin Papers, 3/3/12, Windham Baldwin and Wilson, 14 March 1954; NLW, Jones P/3/68, Jones and Wilson, 16 July 1942.

⁵⁴ Harold Macmillan, *The Blast of War, 1939-1945* (London: Macmillan, 1967), 72; 24-25 September 1939 in Kenneth Young (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, Volume II: 1939-1965* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 43.

stripped of his position as the Prime Minister's right-hand man. Contemporaries gleefully recounted 'Sir H. Quisling's' removal from No. 10 in sensationalist stories which grew into legend.⁵⁵ Removed from No. 10, Wilson had arguably been restored to his proper place and functions as Permanent Secretary to the Treasury and Head of the Civil Service. Yet it was a gilded cage – a grand title and heavy burden, shorn of all access and influence, and with a leper's popularity.⁵⁶ This unpleasant situation depressed Wilson, who privately complained of being made a scapegoat, though he painted a less humiliating picture for curious historians.⁵⁷ Churchill gave him a wide berth, ignored Wilson's advice, and never sent for him. Missives from Wilson were returned to sender with snarky remarks.⁵⁸ The situation whereby such an important mandarin was 'persona very much non grata' and 'never allowed into No. 10', created difficulties.⁵⁹ The situation was the result of attempting to preserve the fiction that civil servants' careers were protected against ministerial interference.

There were schemes in 1941 to remove Wilson from the Treasury, driven by the Labour leadership and supported by Churchill.⁶⁰ Kingsley Wood (Chancellor of the Exchequer) fired a rejoinder at his colleagues. It was a devastating critique of the Establishment's attitude to Wilson. Wood accepted responsibility for any criticisms of Wilson's work while at the Treasury and defended his highest official from all charges. Most significantly, Wood warned that it would be an affront to the Civil Service and 'Munich victimisation' to dismiss an official for following his minister's orders, and that such a move was a Socialist plot to weaken the power of the Treasury.⁶¹ Edward Bridges, who always disliked and resisted attempts to move civil servants, would have agreed with Wood's advice.⁶²

⁵⁵ 16 May 1940 in Pimlott (ed.), *Dalton Diary*, 5-9; CUL, Baldwin 174/292, Wilson to Baldwin, 20 May 1940.

⁵⁶ For Dalton's terrorising and mocking, see 27 May 1940 in Pimlott (ed.), *Dalton Diary*, 23-26

⁵⁷ CUL, Baldwin 174/292, Wilson to Baldwin, 20 May 1940; 3 June 1940 in John Colville, *The Fringes of Powers: Downing Street Diaries, 1939-1955* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985), 147; Paul Addison Papers, Interview with Wilson, 4 April 1967.

⁵⁸ 29 April 1942 in Marguerite Dupree (ed.), *Lancashire and Whitehall: The Diary of Sir Raymond Streat. Volume II: 1939-57* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 88-91; 19 August 1940 in Colville, *Fringes of Power*, 226.

⁵⁹ CAC, CHOH/1/MART, Tape 1, Side 2.

⁶⁰ CAC, CHAR/20/20/28-29, Churchill to Wood, 26 July 1941; CHAR/20/20/30, Attlee's proposal; CHAR/20/20/24, Churchill to Wood, 30 July 1941.

⁶¹ CAC, CHAR/20/20/25-27, Wood to Churchill, 27 July 1941.

⁶² TNA, T/273/151, Bridges to Attlee, 8 April 1946; T/273/127, Bridges, Note for Record, 1 April 1952.

Churchill bade his time. Like Fisher, Wilson supported the principle that Permanent Secretaries should retire at 60 unless asked to remain and knew well that no such invitation would be forthcoming. He thus wrote to announce his retirement on his 60th birthday in August 1942.⁶³ Tellingly, no other Permanent Secretary of retiring age in the great departments during the Second World War – including Cadogan, Maxwell, and Hopkins – was permitted to depart until the last months of war. Wood urged Churchill to bestow an honour on Wilson and Churchill's private secretary agreed that both the Civil Service and Wilson would appreciate a tribute to his long career in public service.⁶⁴ The malicious reply was clear: 'Prime Minister ... feels this is an occasion for silence on his part'.⁶⁵ Wilson was not wrong when he complained that 'Winston has dishonoured the Premiership and the Civil Service in his treatment of me'.⁶⁶

These patterns reveal a rather messier reality to the 'fall' of elite mandarins than the dominant narrative suggests. It is true that unpopular officials were not dismissed from the Civil Service, although they could be side-lined, excluded, demoted through promotion, or made to retire at 60. Just as ministers and Prime Ministers could make a Permanent Secretary and bore responsibility for promotions, it was equally true that interventionist ministers could break a Permanent Secretary, either by removing them from the post, or else emasculating them. Elite civil servants were not, therefore, free from ministerial influence over their careers. Indeed, they were ultimately heavily dependent on politicians for both promotion and longevity. Thus, even those occupying the highest peaks of Whitehall had to nurture relations with those who mattered and to be watchful when tendering advice, arguably calling into question the very principles upon which the Civil Service was said to rest.

The Second Act in the Play

For many mandarins, retirement was a second act; following a brief intermission, they seized opportunities to reinvent themselves in new roles and re-emerged onto the public stage. A quiet retirement was out of reach for many because

⁶³ 29 April 1942 in Dupree (ed.), *Streat Diary. Volume II*, 88-91.

⁶⁴ CAC, MART/4, Wood to Churchill, 16 July 1942; Martin to Rowan, 19 August 1942.

⁶⁵ CAC, MART/4, Rowan to Martin, 21 August 1942.

⁶⁶ NLW, Jones 2/11, 1942 Notebook, ff. 46-47.

the streets of Whitehall were not paved with gold.⁶⁷ Even Cadogan, who came from a privileged background, admitted that while 'I am no whale for work ... I can't stand sitting around ... very expensively, doing nothing' and conceded that 'a pension is only half of full pay, which makes a difference'.⁶⁸ He thus resigned himself to 'take on a good deal ... to eke out what will then be my very exiguous income'.⁶⁹ Married to a fabulously wealthy wife, Vansittart had no need for a second career.

Several post-Whitehall opportunities were closely tied to government business. Like John Anderson, both P.J. Grigg and Hankey were appointed as ministers during the Second World War. Although initially condescendingly criticised as an 'unattractive bureaucrat' and 'nothing more than a civil servant', Anderson became a principal instrument of government and rose meteorically from Lord Privy Seal to Lord President and Chancellor of the Exchequer.⁷⁰ In contrast, Hankey was 'ill-suited' to the job and 'got the boot' in 1942.⁷¹ Similarly, Warren Fisher, who rendered his last public service as Regional Commissioner for Civil Defence, was not a great success.⁷² Another popular trajectory for ex-officials, particularly within the Foreign Office, was to assume posts as Ambassadors, either in Paris, Washington, or to the United Nations.

Other opportunities available to ex-mandarins blurred the lines between public and private sector interests. Hankey and Cadogan were bestowed with Government Directorships of the Suez Canal Company, where they were to represent Britain's interests. Cadogan was also appointed as Chairman of the BBC Board of Governors. It is notable that several retired Heads of Departments progressed to roles in the media where public and private interests closely intersected. Tyrrell became President of the British Board of Film Censors; Norman Brook followed in Cadogan's footsteps at the BBC; while Ivone Kirkpatrick became Chairman of the Independent Television Authority. John Anderson assumed very high-profile public roles after the end of his ministerial career, such as the Chairmanship of the Port of London Authority, which

⁶⁷ For Anderson's financial worries, see BL, MSS Eur F 207/34, Anderson to father, 30 October 1938; John Wheeler-Bennett, *John Anderson: Viscount Waverley* (London: Macmillan, 1962), 178-9; 352-353; Oliver Lyttelton, *The Memoirs of Lord Chandos* (London: The Bodley Head, 1967), 264.

⁶⁸ CAC, ACAD/1/21, 13 June 1950; ACAD/3/15, Cadogan to Theo, 1 May 1945.

⁶⁹ CAC, ACAD/1/20, 31 December 1949.

⁷⁰ 4 November 1939 in Colville, *Fringes of Power*, 47; 13 February 1941 in Pimlott (ed.), *Dalton Diary*, 156-158; Lyttelton, *Memoirs*, 204; 297-298.

⁷¹ Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets. Volume III, 1931-1963* (London: Collins, 1974), 417-541; 30 April 1940 in Crozier, *Off the Record*, 164-165; CAC, AMEL/2/1/34, Hankey to Amery, 6 March 1942; ROSK/7/85, Roskill to Christopher, 5 June 1967.

⁷² *The Manchester Guardian*, 2 April 1942.

carried a salary of £7,500.⁷³ Like his colleagues, Anderson used his connections and knowledge of administration to support the work of organisations. He was particularly interested in the Royal Institute of Public Administration and served as its President to his death when he was succeeded in the role by Edward Bridges. Bridges likewise enjoyed a busy retirement and matched his skills to his lifelong interests. A man keenly interested in education, he was Chancellor of the University of Reading and Chairman of the British Council, Governor of Eton, and of the LSE. He was also involved with the Fine Arts Commission, the Oxford Historic Buildings Fund, the National Trust, and the National Institute for Research into Nuclear Energy.⁷⁴ The Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA) attracted several ex-Permanent Secretaries to participate in discussions and offer insights into current affairs. Vansittart, who dabbled only in opportunities which interested him, participated in RIIA events from time to time, as did Hankey and Cadogan.⁷⁵ However, not all shared equally in the bounty of opportunities to be had. Richard Hopkins, Robert Russell Scott, and Alexander Maxwell had little appetite for work beyond the odd untaxing directorship, or role on a commission. In sharp contrast was Wilson, who sought opportunities but discovered that, tainted by association with appeasement and deserted by friends, the life of an idle pariah was his only option.⁷⁶ Wilson's only public role throughout his long retirement was as Chairman for the National Joint Council for Local Authorities' Administrative, Professional, Technical and Clerical Services. This was despite his name appearing on a list of ex-officials deemed to be suitable for service on commissions and committees.⁷⁷

The frequency with which ex-mandarins secured lucrative private sector directorships demonstrates the regard in which they were held beyond Whitehall. Such positions were rarely taxing, and individuals often held a combination of posts.⁷⁸ Boardrooms occasionally became nexus points where ex-officials sat alongside their past colleagues. Cadogan was joined on the board of the National Provincial Bank by P.J. Grigg. Similarly, when Bridges took up a position with the Equity and Law Life Assurance Society, he was following in Hopkins' footsteps; and Hankey, who served at the Royal Insurance Company and the Nile Insurance Company, was joined at the former by

⁷³ Approximately £260,000 in 2020.

⁷⁴ John Winniffrith, 'Edward Ettingdean Bridges - Baron Bridges, 1892-1969', *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society*, 16 (1970), 38-56 (54-55).

⁷⁵ CAC, STRN/4/8, Vansittart to Strang, 12 May 1953; VNST/II/3/16, Chatham House Roundtable; Rose, *Vansittart*, 285-288.

⁷⁶ 18 November 1942 and 3 April 1944 in Dupree (ed.), *Streat Diary. Volume II*, 102-103; 188-191.

⁷⁷ Listed alongside Anderson and Hopkins, TNA, T/273/64.

⁷⁸ For example, CAC, ACAD/4/11, Ridley to Cadogan, 13 February 1951; ACAD/1/22, 19-21 February and 3 May 1951.

Fisher, who also sat on the board at Martins Bank. Naturally, codes governed these directorships.⁷⁹ For example, Bridges recognised that he ‘must be cautious about any activities’ and sought approval for each offer.⁸⁰ He was advised that a ‘quarantine period’ of a few months before ‘appearing in a new guise’ in public life would ‘avoid any possible suggestion that knowledge of current official policy’ had been ‘carried along’ into the boardroom.⁸¹ Former mandarins could thus expect to prosper at the fringes of the City, on the understanding that codes of behaviour would govern their post-Whitehall lives.

Furthermore, ex-mandarins often re-emerged onto the public stage as peers. Civil Servants possessed an unhealthy obsession with honours as barometers by which to gauge their status.⁸² Some were honoured after retiring as Permanent Secretaries, others were honoured after their final posting to diplomatic missions abroad. Being raised to the peerage was one of the highest marks of distinction. As mentioned above, the offer was never extended to Wilson, while Cadogan and Fisher rejected the honour. Fisher’s refusal stemmed from his disgust with Chamberlain after Munich, yet Cadogan refused a peerage for a more exceptional award. King George VI offered him a peerage or the Order of Merit (OM) – for ‘distinguished service to the Crown’, and Cadogan ‘plumped for the O.M.’ as ‘the highest honour that the King can confer’.⁸³ Restricted to only twenty-four recipients, Cadogan was the first civil servant to receive the honour. John Anderson received both a peerage and, at the end of his life, the OM for ‘long service to the nation in many fields’.⁸⁴ For those who did not reach the heady heights of the OM, a peerage was a very agreeable distinction. Tyrrell, Bridges, Anderson, Hankey, and Vansittart all accepted peerages. Ex-officials entering the chamber were supported and welcomed by colleagues who had already taken their seats.⁸⁵ Mandarins were rarely engaging speakers, although they were active in debates and sat almost exclusively as crossbench peers. Anderson and Norman Brook attributed this to Whitehall’s non-party-political culture which was so deeply ingrained that civil servants carried it into retirement.⁸⁶ The House of Lords thus became a shared space and a platform to remain

⁷⁹ TNA, T/268/21, Padmore to Brook, 2 November 1956.

⁸⁰ TNA, T/268/21, Bridges to Cobbold, 25 July 1956; Padmore to Bridges, 20 November 1956.

⁸¹ Note the language of ‘guises’ here; TNA, T/268/21, Cobbold to Bridges, 27 July 1956.

⁸² Famously lampooned in ‘Doing the Honours’, *Yes Minister* (BBC, 1981).

⁸³ CAC, ACAD/4/10, Lascelles to Cadogan, 9 October 1950; ACAD/1/21, 10 October 1950.

⁸⁴ He was invested on his deathbed in pyjamas, by the Queen’s private secretary; Wheeler-Bennett, *Waverley*, 403.

⁸⁵ CAC, STRN/4/8, Van to Strang, 1 January 1954; CAC, VNST/II/1/9, Hankey to Vansittart, 10 July 1941.

⁸⁶ Bodleian, MS. Eng. lett. c. 274, Brook to Heath, 8 January 1965; MS. Eng. c. 6661, Ava’s diary pages.

active in public life. As demonstrated in the final section of this chapter, it was a locus where networks of ex-mandarins and ex-politicians recrystallised.

Guardians of History

It was neither an accident nor a coincidence that a heavy shroud obscured both officials and officialdom; it was integral to the Civil Service's code of silence. Mandarins who wished to speak were to say the 'right' things and stick to the script or to remain silent, and many ex-officials who spoke and wrote in retirement adhered to this culture of discretion. Ostensibly, officialdom was so keen to inculcate this culture as an extension of the principle that responsibility for all matters of government rested with ministers. While ministers who stood 'to be shot at' would answer attacks in the press and Parliament, officials were 'sheltered from publicity and criticism'.⁸⁷ With nothing to defend or explain, civil servants therefore needed to share only a few light-hearted or poignant reflections, to praise the Establishment, and to disclose no more than the bare bones of their functions. However, there was resistance to this dominant culture of silence as several ex-mandarins deviated from the script in assisting historians with their research, participated in controversial debates, and began to expose the workings of Whitehall in their memoirs. A striking number of the Whitehall elite had been students of modern history or classics. Thoroughly cognisant of the power of narratives, they were fully aware that they were acting as censors, chroniclers and, ultimately, mythmakers. This was arguably their most long-lasting legacy.

Memoirs were often the backbone of the first wave of contemporary history on the interwar period. As a veritable glut of memoirs spewed forth from political, journalistic, and military figures from the 1930s onwards, ex-mandarins sought to participate. There was a wave of memoirs by ex-Permanent Secretaries in the 1950s and 1960s, penned by the likes of Hankey, Vansittart, P.J. Grigg, William Strang, and Ivone Kirkpatrick. Bridges was moved to write only once in a personal vein; he did so to dispel myths which were in danger of harming the reputations of Winston Churchill and the Civil Service.⁸⁸ There was perhaps a stronger culture of publishing memoirs within

⁸⁷ TNA, CAB/21/2193, 'Note on Lord Hankey's Book', 12 November 1945; Bodleian, MS Attlee/Dep. 34, Bridges to Attlee, 25 March 1946, f. 139.

⁸⁸ John Wheeler-Bennett (ed.), *Action This Day: Working with Churchill* (London: Macmillan, 1968).

Foreign Office circles than the wider Civil Service. Draft (and rather bland) memoirs can also be found in the archives of Cadogan, Lindsay, and Fisher. One of the most eagerly sought memoirs which never emerged was that of Horace Wilson. He claimed to have written an unofficial record, in the style of a memoir, 'of my experiences as a Civil Servant', although he left no papers for historians beyond his brief recollections contained in the Cabinet Papers.⁸⁹ That Wilson never published, despite nursing grievances and with other means of earning in retirement closed to him, demonstrated admirable restraint. Moreover, Wilson refused to reply to his critics, or to sue. That he did not might be – and has been – interpreted as either an attempt to deflect some of the criticism of appeasement from Neville Chamberlain, or else guilt, although Wilson was 'unrepentant' about his activities in government.⁹⁰ Furthermore, official histories were often disappointing. Official histories of departments such as the Foreign Office, Treasury, and Home Office were written by ex-Heads of Departments acting as expert witnesses. These unsurprisingly sanitised volumes for lay readers were like cheap magicians' tricks, where the door to a cabinet was opened, only for the audience to stare at a false screen. The official histories thus obscured more than they exposed.⁹¹

Biographies, occasionally commissioned by ex-officials and their families, also contributed significantly to first-wave scholarship. John Wheeler-Bennett was approached by Anderson's son and widow, and Stephen Roskill by the Hankeys. Some biographers, such as Ian Colvin, were journalists by profession, while others were related to the subject, as in the case of Crowe's daughter. The close ties between subjects and biographers sometimes generated friction. Stephen Roskill allowed the Hankey family to read the typescript and offer 'impressions' but refused to 'accept any form of censorship'.⁹² Hankey's eldest son, Robin, agreed that 'this must be your book ... an objective historical study of Pop and of his era', although there were tensions over more critical and personal passages in the manuscript.⁹³ Even writing in the 1980s, Eunan O'Halpin encountered similar difficulties with Fisher's son, who threatened O'Halpin with legal proceedings and reminded him that 'this is your book. But this is my family'.⁹⁴ Both O'Halpin and Wheeler-Bennett refrained from publishing material which might

⁸⁹ CAC, ROSK/7/94, Wilson to Roskill, 5 August 1967; TNA, CAB/127/158.

⁹⁰ Colville believed he was protecting Chamberlain; *Footprints in Time* (London: Collins, 1976), 72-73; CRL, NC/11/1/924, Wilson to Anne Chamberlain, 5 May 1958; NC/11/1/925, Wilson to Anne Chamberlain, 18 July 1948.

⁹¹ Strang and Newsam wrote the Foreign and Home Office volumes respectively, while Bridges penned the volume on the Treasury.

⁹² CAC, ROSK/10/33, 'Prince of Secretaries', 22 March 1972.

⁹³ CAC, ROSK/7/78, July 1970 correspondence.

⁹⁴ CAC, OHPN/1, Robin Fisher to O'Halpin, 1 February 1988.

distress the families, largely on the personal lives of Fisher and Anderson. Biographers thus navigated a minefield. They had to negotiate access to archives in an age before documents had been released for public access and frequently relied heavily upon oral testimony, which was by no means infallible.⁹⁵

The interwar period through to the start of the Cold War was immediately controversial and attracted intense scholarly interest. Although much of this journalist-style history was of poor quality, it was a necessary step as 'an immense amount of knowledge would be lost for ever if contemporary history was not written'.⁹⁶ Historians' reliance on oral history in first-wave scholarship is useful in understanding how ex-mandarins fulfilled the requirements of discretion when there was such demand for their unique insights. Historians from Llewelyn Woodward to Martin Gilbert contacted the giants of Whitehall and requested assistance in the form of interviews, diary snippets, or impressions on manuscripts.⁹⁷ In this way, even those who themselves did not publish participated in history-writing. Several might have felt a duty to assist, others may have enjoyed the attention, while a significant number sought to correct the misrepresentations of their colleagues. Some of the recollections offered were arguably more truthful – or at least, less distorted – than others, although all testimonies were shaped by perception, memory, and relationships. There were also questions to which there was no simple answer.⁹⁸

Additionally, ex-mandarins often helped friends and acquaintances with their memoirs. These were usually ministers with whom they had maintained good relations, including Churchill, Eden, and Sam Hoare. Hoare, for instance, interviewed and consulted with Vansittart and Cadogan, Hankey and Bridges, Brook and Wilson.⁹⁹ Ex-officials tended to dislike having such assistance acknowledged. Most notably, Brook asked for his name to be excised from the acknowledgements of Churchill's memoirs, despite having gone to great lengths to support the volumes.¹⁰⁰ David Reynolds has convincingly posited that this was an attempt to conceal the extent of his involvement

⁹⁵ The Public Records Act (1958) stipulated that most records would be transferred to the Public Record Office thirty years after creation and that most would be opened 50 years after creation. The Public Records Act (1967) reduced the period whereby public records were closed from fifty to thirty years, with the exception of sensitive material.

⁹⁶ CAC, ROSK/10/5, 'Lecture for Canadian Tour, 1959'.

⁹⁷ For a selection, see CAC, ACAD/4/4 – ACAD/4/6; ROSK/7/90 – ROSK/7/94.

⁹⁸ CAC, ACAD/4/4, Cadogan to Birkenhead, 12 October 1964.

⁹⁹ CRL, Templewood Papers, especially XIX/Files 5 and 12.

¹⁰⁰ CAC, CHUR/4/18/234, Brook to Churchill, 28 November 1949

from Attlee.¹⁰¹ Similarly, Cadogan wished to conceal the extent of assistance he provided to Lord Birkenhead because 'I don't like telling tales out of school (and I suppose I am exposing myself to all sorts of penalties for disclosing ... what transpired at a Cabinet meeting ... But after all it does show that it was Edward [Halifax] who had the courage to make the decision'.¹⁰² It was thus vitally important that officials spoke well of ministers and portrayed them in a positive light. Most intriguingly, despite claiming to have no 'wish to be involved in past history', Wilson engaged with historians to protect Chamberlain's reputation and to defend the policy of appeasement.¹⁰³ Wilson's comments were always guarded and he stuck closely to the official 'script'; he was careful never to bring himself, the Civil Service, or Chamberlain into disrepute, although historians were so sceptical of his testimony that he struggled to turn the tide of criticism.¹⁰⁴ Wilson also worked alongside Chamberlain's widow and Keith Feiling in the early 1940s to bring a favourable biography of Chamberlain to fruition.¹⁰⁵ Elite officials thus participated in writing the first histories of the period and succeeded to a considerable extent in colouring these accounts with their own interpretations and perceptions.

It was Vansittart who was most vocal after departing from the Permanent Under-Secretary's office. A remarkable man of letters, Vansittart began to broadcast and publish controversial pieces during the war from his unhappy position as Chief Diplomatic Advisor. These broadcasts provoked strong criticism, including from Cadogan, who thought them 'vulgar and ridiculous'.¹⁰⁶ *The Times* charged him with a terrible breach of the tradition of the Civil Service, which should be unseen and unheard in public life.¹⁰⁷ Despite securing Churchill's permission to continue broadcasting amid the furor, Vansittart was ill and frustrated, and pressed ahead with his retirement on his 60th birthday.¹⁰⁸ He looked forward to freedom from the 'slavery' of the Civil Service

¹⁰¹ David Reynolds, 'Official History: How Churchill and the Cabinet Office wrote *The Second World War*', *Historical Research*, 78:201 (2005), 400-422 (419).

¹⁰² CAC, ACAD/4/4, Birkenhead correspondence, 1964-1965.

¹⁰³ CUL, Templewood XVII/File 1, Hoare to Wilson, 23 September 1948.

¹⁰⁴ CAC, ROSK/7/94, Wilson to Roskill, 5 August 1967 and 19 June 1967.

¹⁰⁵ CRL, NC/11/15/ 125, Wilson to Anne, 11 June 1941; NC/11/15/134, Wilson to Anne, 6 November 1941.

¹⁰⁶ CAC, ACAD/1/9, 4 December 1940; Hansard, House of Commons Debates, Fifth Series, vol. 367, cols. 718-719, 5 December 1940.

¹⁰⁷ There was a stormy Lords debate on Vansittart's activities; *The Times*, 20 February 1941; *The Manchester Guardian*, 24 February 1941 was almost alone in defending Vansittart.

¹⁰⁸ CAC, VNST/II/1/9, Vansittart to Eden, 10 February 1941; CHAR/20/30/53-58, correspondence on broadcasting, early 1941; CHAR/20/30/53, Cooper to Churchill, 21 February 1941 and Churchill minute, 22 February 1941; CHAR/20/30/58, Churchill to Cooper, 6 March 1941.

and the 'sham' of the role of Chief Diplomatic Advisor, where his advice was rarely sought.¹⁰⁹ His outspokenness only increased in retirement. From *Black Record* to *Lessons of my Life*, as well as BBC broadcasts, Vansittart bluntly ruminated on the German national character and leaped into a world of controversy. He denied the narrative of 'two Germanies' and observed that German militarism was a dangerous disease of magnitude, rather than confined to a minority of National Socialists who had kidnapped the nation. His views – pejoratively termed 'Vansittartism' – were often misrepresented.¹¹⁰ Critics swarmed in all organs of the media and in rebutting his opponents, Vansittart became a prolific public correspondent. Moreover, Vansittart defended his reputation against those who pointed a finger at him as a 'guilty man', responsible for successive diplomatic failures in the interwar years and, ultimately, the outbreak of war.¹¹¹ In this vein, he successfully pursued a court case against *Time* magazine.¹¹²

Vansittart also sought permission to publish documents he had authored while in office to exonerate himself from such charges. Eden approved this during the war, on the proviso that Vansittart waited until after the official publication of pre-war diplomatic correspondence. However, the Foreign Office decided in 1945 to prohibit the private publication of memoranda prepared by officials, and thus when Vansittart sought permission to finally publish, the Permanent Under-Secretary (Orme Sargent) advised Attlee and the Cabinet to refuse the request.¹¹³ Bridges agreed that there must be an injunction on officials publishing documents.¹¹⁴ Vansittart was disgusted with the decision, which he believed exposed him to continuous attack.¹¹⁵

Only indiscreet, gossipy memoirs are ever worth reading, yet these were exceptionally rare. The process of vetting memoirs empowered officials to play a vital role in gate-keeping contemporary history, particularly in the case of the Cabinet Secretary. Through an *ad hoc* process, Hankey assumed responsibility for vetting memoirs on behalf of the government to guard against the publication of sensitive

¹⁰⁹ 19 April and 27 May 1941 in Pimlott (ed.), *Dalton Diary*, 185; CAC, VNST/II/1/9, Vansittart to Eden, 10 February 1941; VNST/II/1/6, Sargent to Vansittart, undated; Vansittart to Eden, 8 April 1941.

¹¹⁰ CAC, VNST/II/1/15, from *The Ashbridge Journal*, Vansittart to Dugdale, 13 July 1942; Robert Vansittart, 'Vansittartism', *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 783:131 (1942), 203-208.

¹¹¹ 'Victim of Appeasement', *Time Magazine*, 2 June 1941, 28.

¹¹² CAC, VNST/I/4/6, Vansittart to Luce, 17 July 1941.

¹¹³ Bodleian, MS Attlee/Dep. 34, Sargent to Attlee, 27 February 1946, ff. 145-147.

¹¹⁴ Bodleian, MS Attlee/Dep. 34, Minute to Attlee, 1 March 1946, f. 144; Attlee minute, 3 March, ff. 148-149; CAC, VNST/II/1/9, Sargent to Vansittart, 6 September and 30 October 1946.

¹¹⁵ CAC, VNST/II/1/9, Vansittart to Sargent, 2 November 1946.

material or undiplomatic remarks.¹¹⁶ Bridges and Brook followed in his footsteps and in vetting memoirs, became 'guardian[s] of secrecy'.¹¹⁷ The three Cabinet Secretaries were highly skilled at obstructing publication when they came across contentious passages. David Reynolds's exposition of how Bridges and Brook simultaneously supported and vetted Churchill's history of the Second World War adds intriguing nuance to this function.¹¹⁸ It was a 'generally accepted tradition' that officials were 'under an obligation to consult the Government of the day ... in regard to the publication of any confidential matter ... and to obtain ... formal permission'.¹¹⁹

Publication of Hankey's memoirs, covering the First World War and based on his detailed diary, ran aground when he found himself subjected to the same rules which he had enforced on others. He hoped to divulge his influence and position at the very heart of the war machine, recounting private conversations with statesmen and War Cabinet proceedings, and highlighting how he initiated several crucial policy decisions. Indeed, in writing his memoir, Hankey found that the 'great difficulty is to avoid being egotistical'.¹²⁰ The result was the antithesis of the twin principles of discretion and modesty. Bridges immediately raised objections to Hankey's typescript and permission to publish was withheld. Officials discussed sanctions should he proceed with publication and consulted with the Treasury Solicitor to confirm that the Court would grant an injunction.¹²¹

Officialdom's rationale for banning the volumes is highly revealing. Roskill claimed that the crux of the matter was Bridges's conception of how an elite civil servant should properly handle confidential information gained in the course of official duties, and there is much evidence to support this view.¹²² Bridges, Brook, and Hopkins agreed that an indiscreet memoir based on a diary was a breach of confidentiality. As Bridges explained, mandarins 'privileged to occupy positions of exceptional trust ... are from the nature of our employment bound by special obligations of reticence. Indeed, our utility as public servants depends on confidence that this reticence will be observed'.¹²³ This

¹¹⁶ John F. Naylor, *A Man and an Institution: Sir Maurice Hankey, the Cabinet Secretariat and the Custody of Cabinet Secrecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

¹¹⁷ TNA, CAB/21/2677, Bridges to Cripps, 1 July 1942.

¹¹⁸ David Reynolds, 'Official History', 400-422.

¹¹⁹ TNA, CAB/21/2193, Bridges to Addison, 25 April 1946.

¹²⁰ CAC, HNKY 3/35, Hankey to Adeline, 30 November 1928.

¹²¹ TNA, CAB/21/2193, Laithwaite to Bridges and Brook, 2 April 1945; Barnes' correspondence, February 1946.

¹²² Roskill, *Hankey. Volume III*, 619-620.

¹²³ TNA, CAB/21/2193, Bridges to Churchill, 9 December 1944; Hopkins agreed, minute, 17 January 1945.

view was widely shared by other elite civil servants who published dull, bland memoirs – or did not publish at all – because they had been soaked in cultures of discretion and ‘should not dream of betraying the confidences to which ... [their] job gave ... [them] access’.¹²⁴ It was thus deemed to be vital to the core functions and reputation of the Civil Service that officials were trusted by ministers not to divulge secrets and confidences.¹²⁵ Such indiscretions might destroy the special relationship between ministers and chief advisors; it would nurture suspicion in politicians’ minds that civil servants would one day reveal confidential conversations, and thus create a tendency whereby ministers would exclude mandarins from discussions.¹²⁶ Silence was indelibly linked to ‘confidence’ and trust.¹²⁷

Yet trust was a cunning smokescreen, for a more terrifying prospect haunted officialdom. It is telling that Bridges disliked Hankey’s memoirs laying bare ‘with an unfortunate wealth of detail, the extent to which Ministers ... relied upon the advice and help given by their chief officials and advisers’. It presented the impression that ministers had little oversight of their officials’ activities and were highly dependent on mandarins.¹²⁸ Furthermore, this generation firmly believed in closed government as the highest and most efficient form of governance.¹²⁹ Bridges supported a blanket injunction against officials publishing, and a 60-year time limit on accessing government records.¹³⁰ There would be no benefits derived from lifting the curtain, permitting outsiders to cast their eyes over the inner sanctum, and to learn the secrets of government. Indeed, there were things which it would be unfortunate for outsiders to know, either for bringing the Civil Service or individuals into disrepute, or for exposing methods and activities to criticism. Whitehall zealously guarded its secrets from outsiders so that a particular narrative could flourish, replete with mysteries, myths, and misperceptions.

Hankey struggled for years to overcome successive governments’ opposition to his memoirs. He repeated in a refrain several reasons why he did not consider himself to be bound by the conventions of discretion: the events described were so far in the

¹²⁴ Liddell Hart Centre, ISMAY/1/14/7, Ismay to Brook, 12 April 1957.

¹²⁵ TNA, CAB/21/ 2193, ‘Note on Lord Hankey’s Book’, 12 November 1945.

¹²⁶ TNA, CAB/21/2193, Bridges to Hankey, 23 February 1945; Brook minute, 5 May 1945; Bridges to Churchill, 9 December 1944; Churchill, ‘Lord Hankey’s Book’, 22 January 1945; Addison minute, 12 November 1945; Bridges minute, 16 January 1946.

¹²⁷ TNA, CAB/21/2193, Bridges minutes, 28 July 1945.

¹²⁸ TNA, CAB/21/2193, Bridges to Churchill, 9 December 1944.

¹²⁹ Hennessy, *Whitehall*, 346-347.

¹³⁰ Chapman, *Ethics*, 225; 310; TNA, CAB/21/1998, Bridges to Brook, 5 April 1943; PREM/11/4661, Brook to Churchill, 21 February 1955.

past and had already been revealed in considerable detail by other writers; he had been a military official and not a civil servant during the First World War; and all his Prime Ministers, including Lloyd George, had known of his diary and had encouraged him to write a memoir.¹³¹ Hankey considered obstruction from the Treasury and Cabinet Office to be the result of 'jealousy', as well as fear, because his memoirs revealed 'where some of the big ideas came from'. He was particularly bitter against Bridges and Churchill.¹³² Hankey consequently revised his memoir, removing offensive material and making alterations 'designed to soften his judgements and to damp down the impression that he did most of their (good) work for them', yet permission was still withheld.¹³³ The arrival of the Attlee government raised Hankey's hopes and he once more sought permission. Bridges, Lord Addison, and James Chuter Ede agreed that publication could not proceed.¹³⁴ Hankey seethed against mutilating censorship. He bade his time and resubmitted the manuscript to Harold Macmillan. Following a long-drawn out battle with the new government, in which Hankey was threatened with prosecution, Macmillan suddenly capitulated. There is little sense of why Macmillan rejected the Treasury and Cabinet Office's advice in 1959 and approved publication.¹³⁵ Although greatly bowdlerised, the memoirs published in the early 1960s nevertheless breached the principles of modesty and discretion. The struggle over the memoirs is thus revealing of how disobedient ex-officials could undermine dominant cultures to disclose secrets. At the same time, it reveals how serving mandarins kept a watchful eye on those who strayed from the ideal model of discretion. The considerable success of both censors *and* defiant rebels in manipulating and controlling contemporary history is striking. Churchill was therefore wrong.¹³⁶ History was written not by *victors*, but by *insiders*.

There was a danger of allowing ex-officials to speak and write because memory was contested and the past – particularly the 1930s – was controversial. Narratives were sometimes challenged in public debates which played out on bookshelves, and in the national press and Parliament. One of the most striking examples of officials attacking one another over conflicting accounts of the past was the case of Walford Selby's memoir. Selby had served successive Foreign Secretaries as private secretary, and subsequently Ambassador to Austria and then Portugal. He sought to leverage his

¹³¹ CAC, HNKY/3/46, Hankey to Henry, 25 September, and 4 December 1944.

¹³² CAC, HNKY/3/47, Hankey to Henry, 25 February 1945.

¹³³ TNA, CAB/21/2193, Brook minute, 5 May 1945.

¹³⁴ TNA, CAB/21/2193, Bridges to Attlee, 18 January 1946.

¹³⁵ CAC, HNKY/3/58; Roskill, *Hankey. Volume III*, 615-619.

¹³⁶ The provenance is disputed.

'insider' perspective to write 'true history' and correct the mistruths of his colleagues.¹³⁷ Selby attributed almost all the problems in the interwar period to the Head of the Civil Service. He charged Fisher with meddling in the organisation of Whitehall to prevent reform, interfering in promotions within the Foreign Office to further the careers of the wrong men, using his powers of patronage to reward loyalty and thus 'enslaving allies across Whitehall', being high-handed in his dealings with the Foreign Office, restricting the flow of information to the Cabinet, and seizing control of policymaking. In repetitive and vitriolic attacks which verged into obsession, Selby asserted that there had been no limit to Fisher's interference. The other villain in Selby's narrative was Vansittart. As briefly mentioned in chapter one, Selby wrongly believed that Vansittart owed his promotion to Permanent Under-Secretary to Fisher. He accused Vansittart of failing to protect the Foreign Office from Fisher's incursions, ignoring diplomatic despatches, misreading the international situation, and thus assisting Fisher in bringing about a 'diplomatic twilight'. In Selby's narrative, Fisher and Vansittart joined Baldwin, Chamberlain, and Wilson in the dock as 'guilty men'.¹³⁸ Selby was encouraged by a wide circle of supporters who cultivated connections to widen their network.¹³⁹ Lord Elibank's tract, published in 1946, attacked Fisher for abusing his powers and interfering in foreign affairs, although the account was riddled with factual errors.¹⁴⁰ Nonetheless, Elibank stridently asserted that Fisher was a conceited 'Mr. Know-all' who, once 'garbed in the cloak fashioned from the powers handed over to him' as Head of the Civil Service, 'became ... a real danger to the State'.¹⁴¹ Similarly, Victor Wellesley (previously Deputy Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office), F. Ashton-Gwatkin (a fellow diplomat), and the Conservative MP Henry Legge-Bourke blamed Fisher for the 'serious abuse' of power which weakened the organisation and authority of the Foreign Office.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ Bodleian, MS. Eng. c. 6602, Selby to Colvin, 13 August 1953.

¹³⁸ For a selection of Selby's writings, see Walford Selby, *Diplomatic Twilight, 1930-1940* (London: John Murray, 1953), Bodleian, MS. Eng. c. 6602, 'The Treasury and the Foreign Office, 1919-1939', Selby, 6 March 1953; MS. Eng. c. 6595, Selby to Murray, 22 October 1952; TNA, FO/370/2095/LS35/2, Selby, 'Lord Vansittart's Warnings', *Truth*, 7 April 1950.

¹³⁹ Bodleian, MS. Eng. c. 6595, Murray to Selby, 12 January and 27 June 1951; MS. Eng. c. 6613; CAC, AMEJ/2/1/19, Selby to Amery, 2 November 1955.

¹⁴⁰ Arthur Murray, *Reflections on Some Aspects of British Foreign Policy Between the Two World Wars* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1946), 45-48.

¹⁴¹ Bodleian, MS. Eng. c. 6595, Murray to Selby, 2 October 1951.

¹⁴² *The Spectator*, 28 October 1949; F.T.A. Ashton-Gwatkin, *The British Foreign Service: A Discussion of the Development and Function of the British Foreign Service* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1950), 26-27; Henry Legge-Bourke, *Master of the Offices* (London: Falcon Press, 1950), 2-19.

Selby's memoir, *Diplomatic Twilight*, tapped into much wider controversies over the role of the Head of the Service and appeasement. In light of controversies surrounding the position of the Head of the Civil Service during both Fisher and Wilson's tenures, the Lords debated the role in 1942.¹⁴³ Eric Drummond (now Lord Perth) had been passed over for promotion in favour of Vansittart in 1929 and was a close associate of Selby. He led the debate in the Lords against Fisher. John Simon and William Tyrrell spoke in favour of Fisher, yet it was Hankey who made one of the most striking contributions. Paying tribute to Fisher's work, Hankey nevertheless argued that 'Treasury control' was strengthened by the arrangement whereby the Head of the Civil Service was the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, to the detriment of efficiency and good governance.¹⁴⁴

Debates over the role of the Head of the Civil Service continued after the war. For instance, Thomas Balogh, writing in the late 1950s after the uncontroversial tenures of Hopkins and Bridges, claimed that the 'power of the Head of the Civil Service ... is far beyond the wildest dreams of the territorial oligarchs of the eighteenth century' and that this power was a 'menace to the future of the country' and a 'threat to national survival'.¹⁴⁵ Alongside such dramatic attacks, Selby's narrative gained extra currency following the publication of Anthony Eden's memoirs, which testified to Fisher's interference. Aspects of Selby's narrative continue to be treated as scripture by historians.¹⁴⁶

Despite Selby's largely mendacious claims, Fisher did not answer his critics, although he was privately unforgiving of those who criticised any aspect of the Treasury's work, or his own role.¹⁴⁷ This is perhaps unsurprising given the tradition of public silence, in which Fisher fervently believed.¹⁴⁸ Fisher also felt that Selby was unworthy of 'powder and shot'.¹⁴⁹ His silence should not be interpreted as guilt. While there is some substance to Selby's claims, the narrative is not truthful. Selby and his

¹⁴³ Hansard, House of Lords Debates, Fifth Series, vol. 125, cc. 275-325, 26 November 1942.

¹⁴⁴ The most intelligent discussion on 'Treasury control' is G.C. Peden, *British Rearmament and the Treasury: 1932-1939* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1979).

¹⁴⁵ Thomas Balogh, 'The Apotheosis of the Dilettante: The Establishment of Mandarins', in *The Establishment*, edited by Hugh Thomas (London: Anthony Blond, 1959), 83-126.

¹⁴⁶ For a recent example, see Adrian Phillips, *Fighting Churchill, Appeasing Hitler* (London: Biteback, 2019), 59-61.

¹⁴⁷ Fisher Papers, correspondence with Chatfield, March 1945.

¹⁴⁸ See his correspondence with J.M. Keynes on the importance of public silence, Archives Centre, King's College, Cambridge [hereafter King's College Archives Centre], JMK/L/33/95-101; JMK/L/38/65-92.

¹⁴⁹ Quoted in CAC, VNST/II/1/50, Vansittart to Blake, 1 May 1953.

cabal bore deep grudges against Fisher and Vansittart.¹⁵⁰ Fisher certainly roamed far and wide and became interested in, and attempted to influence, Britain's foreign and defence policy.¹⁵¹ However, he was no appeaser and never dominated, nor enjoyed much success, in attempting to influence foreign policy.¹⁵² Similarly, it was true that Fisher attempted to influence ambassadorial appointments, although he struggled to find traction. Likewise, nor were his attempts to reform the Foreign Office between 1935 and 1938 successful.¹⁵³ Selby's claims that Vansittart was an appeaser who exposed the Foreign Office's authority to incursions can be similarly rebutted.

Unsurprisingly, the Establishment strongly objected to the narrative presented by Selby and his co-conspirators. Although suspicious of Whitehall 'autocracy' and hopeful of reforming the Head of the Civil Service post, Attlee refused to accept Legge-Bourke's 'muddled and inaccurate' claims and insisted that the existence of a 'super-official not subject to ministerial direction' was 'quite chimerical'.¹⁵⁴ Attlee's public correspondence with Legge-Bourke was really the voice of Bridges, speaking from behind the arras. Bridges was eager to defend his own position within the machine, as well as the narrative of a deferential, uncontroversial Civil Service, despite himself believing that Fisher had at times exceeded his functions.¹⁵⁵ Officialdom also attempted to stifle Selby's memoir.¹⁵⁶ Selby was allowed to publish within the framework of the Official Secrets Act as the Foreign Office could not censor interpretation. However, the Permanent Under-Secretary, William Strang, warned Selby that the department was not favourable to publication and disputed the truthfulness of Selby's narrative. Strang also cautioned against civil servants casting aspersions upon each other, leaving all open to attack, and inviting controversy by raising the ghosts of 'old, unhappy far-off things'.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁰ Bodleian, MS. Eng. c. 6595, Selby to Murray, 19 June 1951; MS. Eng. c. 6613, Wellesley to Gwatkin, 11 September 1942; Selby minute, 14 March 1958; TNA, T/273/94, Wellesley to Fisher, 28 October 1936; FO/371/18358, R5179/37/3, especially Vansittart to Selby, 20 September 1934; FO/371/18358, R7108/37/3, Vansittart minute, 18 December 1934.

¹⁵¹ O'Halpin, *Head of the Civil Service*, 290-291.

¹⁵² G.C. Peden, 'Sir Warren Fisher and British Rearmament against Germany', *The English Historical Review*, 94:370 (1979), 29-47; TNA, FO/371/19245/F6729, Vansittart minute, 29 October 1935; FO/371/20215/F320, Wellesley minute, 22 January 1936.

¹⁵³ TNA, T/273/94, Fisher to Vansittart, 8 January 1934; Fisher to Vansittart, 31 January 1934; Vansittart to Fisher, 31 January 1934; Fisher to Vansittart, 1 February 1934; Fisher to Wilson, 20 December 1937; Fisher to Baldwin, 31 December 1935; CAC, PHPP/1/3/2, Fisher to Phipps, 21 January 1937.

¹⁵⁴ CAC, ATLE/2/1, Attlee's memorandum, c. 1930s; TNA, PREM/8/17; PREM/8/1142, especially Bridges's minute, 3 January 1950.

¹⁵⁵ TNA, T/273/74, Bridges to Attlee, 5 November 1946.

¹⁵⁶ The Foreign Office thought him ridiculous, TNA, FO/370/2095/LS35/2, Selby's correspondence with Passant, 1950.

¹⁵⁷ Bodleian, MS. Eng. c. 6613, Strang to Selby, 27 August 1949.

It was Vansittart who took up the mantle of defending himself and Fisher when *Diplomatic Twilight* was published in 1953. This defence of Fisher (who had died in 1948) was admirable, particularly as Fisher turned against Vansittart after the Abyssinia crisis and refused to see him after his retirement.¹⁵⁸ Vansittart sprang into action at once and published a multitude of letters in the national press.¹⁵⁹ He attempted to assemble a broad network with which to mount a public defence in journals, the press, and in Parliament. In this way, Vansittart sought to harness the collective capital of his associates to counteract the influence of Selby's network. Robert Blake, an historian tasked with reviewing the book, brought several serious inaccuracies to Vansittart's attention. Agreeing that 'libelling of the dead is utterly odious', Vansittart described *Diplomatic Twilight* as a 'tissue of plain lies' and was thrilled to read Blake's critical review of the book in *The Evening Standard*.¹⁶⁰ He also approached historians who might be asked to review the book, including John Wheeler-Bennett, while Blake lassoed Hugh Trevor-Roper to the cause, and the latter's review of the 'monstrous' memoir was equally critical.¹⁶¹ Journalists disputed large sections of Selby's thesis, from Ian Colvin and A.L. Kennedy to Lord Altrincham.¹⁶²

Vansittart also asked his colleagues, serving and retired, for support. He wrote to Bridges, at this time Head of the Civil Service, asking him to testify that Fisher had neither abused the post, nor acted as an 'octopus' to paralyse foreign policy.¹⁶³ Bridges took the reputation of the Civil Service most seriously and was eager to 'vindicate the memory of a great public servant ... a man moreover to whom I owe a great deal and for whom I have strong feelings of loyalty and affection'.¹⁶⁴ However, Bridges was wary of drawing any more attention to the memoir, and felt that critical reviews had already dealt a sufficient blow to Selby's claims. Furthermore, he was disinclined to intervene given his proximity to the debate and instead offered to 'stir up someone else to do it', if necessary. This indirect approach in defending the Civil Service, often by prodding ministers and departments to release statements, was his preferred method and

¹⁵⁸ CAC, VNST/II/1/50, Vansittart to Nicolson, 30 May 1953.

¹⁵⁹ Articles and letters ranged across publications including *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Times*, the *Daily Express*, *The Manchester Guardian*, the *Evening Standard*, *The Statist*, the *Economist*, and *The Sunday Times*, from May to July 1953.

¹⁶⁰ CAC, VNST/II/1/50, Vansittart to Blake, 1 May 1953; Blake to Vansittart, 5 May 1953.

¹⁶¹ CAC, VNST/II/1/50, Vansittart to Wheeler-Bennett, 6 May 1953; Blake to Vansittart, and Trevor-Roper to Vansittart, both 11 May 1953.

¹⁶² Copies are held in CAC, VNST/II/5/13, Ian Colvin, 'The Selby-Vansittart Controversy' (1953) and VNST/II/1/50, A.L. Kennedy, 'Diplomatic Twilight' (1953); Bodleian, MS. Eng. c. 6602, Altrincham to Selby, 20 May 1953.

¹⁶³ CAC, VNST/II/1/50, Vansittart to Bridges, 5 May and 20 May 1953

¹⁶⁴ CAC, VNST/II/1/50, Bridges to Vansittart, 18 May 1953.

allowed him to maintain the principle that civil servants should not engage in controversies.¹⁶⁵ Additionally, Vansittart turned to Strang, with whom he was furious for allowing the book to be passed for publication.¹⁶⁶ Strang, however, would only remind Vansittart of the limitations of the Foreign Office's powers of censorship.¹⁶⁷

Vansittart also approached Foreign Office colleagues – Lancelot Oliphant, Clifford Norton, Orme Sargent, and Rex Leeper – and instructed them to publicly refute the charges.¹⁶⁸ The foursome was a disappointment. They all advised that Selby's delusions should be allowed to pass without further inadvertent publicity as it was undignified for a 'St Bernard to pay any attention to the yappings of a toy retriever!'¹⁶⁹ Identical advice was tendered by both Sam Hoare and John Simon, although they offered to intervene if Vansittart insisted.¹⁷⁰ Fisher's family also offered their services to Vansittart in rebutting the venomous attack and published several fiery letters.¹⁷¹ As the slew of attacks from Selby's networks continued over the summer of 1953, Vansittart turned to one of his oldest friends. He asked Harold Nicolson to write a letter defending *him*, for not a single person had, and Vansittart did not wish the silence to be misinterpreted.¹⁷² Unlike those who refused to publicly affix themselves to Vansittart's network and lend him their capital, Nicolson published a staunch defence of Vansittart in *The Times*. Vansittart also secured the backing of Selwyn Lloyd (then Foreign Secretary) and Bridges for a statement of support from the government.¹⁷³ In the Parliamentary debate which followed, Vansittart successfully stirred his friends Lord Reading and Lord Templewood (both ex-Foreign Secretaries) to defend himself and Fisher from the charges.¹⁷⁴

There was conspicuous silence from several contemporaries. Wilson and Hopkins, both Treasury figures and Fisher's successors, perhaps felt that their contributions would be of little assistance and might violate the hallowed code of discretion. Moreover, although a friend to Fisher and a man with a towering reputation,

¹⁶⁵ Chapman, *Ethics*, 13-14.

¹⁶⁶ CAC, VNST/II/1/50, Vansittart to Strang, 1 May 1953.

¹⁶⁷ CAC, VNST/II/1/50, Strang to Vansittart, 8 May 1953.

¹⁶⁸ CAC, VNST/II/1/50, Vansittart to Oliphant, 6 May 1953.

¹⁶⁹ CAC, VNST/II/1/50, Oliphant to Vansittart, 10 May 1953; Sargent to Vansittart, 13 May 1953.

¹⁷⁰ CAC, VNST/II/1/50, Hoare to Vansittart, 12 May 1953 and Simon to Vansittart, 13 May 1953.

¹⁷¹ Many were by Robin Fisher, but see also Mary Fisher, writing in *The Daily Telegraph*, June 1953.

¹⁷² CAC, VNST/II/1/50, Vansittart to Nicolson, 23 May 1953; he complained of the same to Bridges, 20 May 1953.

¹⁷³ CAC, VNST/II/1/50, Vansittart to Lloyd, 26 June 1953, Vansittart to Nicolson, 26 June 1953.

¹⁷⁴ This defence was repeated in Templewood's memoir, *Nine Troubled Years* (London: Collins, 1954), 137-138.

Anderson was also quiet, although as he had been absent from Whitehall for much of the 1930s and observed a code of silence throughout his retirement, this is not surprising. Cadogan and Hankey's absence is more striking. Vansittart did not seek Cadogan's help, and nor did Cadogan offer it. Resentments lingered, and in the fifteen years between Vansittart's retirement and death, he and Cadogan dined together only once.¹⁷⁵ It is difficult to discern Cadogan's position: Cadogan certainly felt that Vansittart had mishandled aspects of interwar diplomacy and was critical of Fisher's conduct as Head of the Civil Service, yet he also thought Selby to be a 'silly little pipsqueak'.¹⁷⁶ Hankey's absence is equally notable. He rarely refrained from intervening in disputes and was at the same time cooperating closely with Vansittart on matters relating to the Suez Canal. Vansittart was very disappointed not to see Hankey publish a letter in the press; the ex-Cabinet Secretary instead sent a private letter to Fisher's family, deploring the attack on his colleague.¹⁷⁷ Hankey's silence might be understood with reference to his friendships with both Elibank and Selby, as well as lingering resentments towards both Fisher and Vansittart concerning the trio's differences over defence requirements, appeasement, and 'Treasury control'.¹⁷⁸

Vansittart struggled to win the war over history, just as he struggled to assemble an 'old boys' network. For decades, historical consensus tended to swallow Selby's narrative, particularly concerning Fisher, regardless of documentary evidence and the excellent work of Eunan O'Halpin and George Peden in unravelling many of these myths. In adhering to Selby's narrative, historians demonstrated the power of contemporary history and the ways in which ex-officials successfully turned their memories, perceptions, and resentments into resilient myths. That *Diplomatic Twilight* and the myths contained within remained so popular may speak to a dominant culture among historians conditioned by the ways in which the Civil Service is conceived in popular discourse. Perhaps Selby showed them an image of an omnipotent and dangerous elite Civil Service which they found too convincing to question.

¹⁷⁵ Based on Cadogan's detailed record of his daily activities. See CAC, ACAD/1/26, 28 September 1955.

¹⁷⁶ CAC, ACAD/1/15, 14 October 1945.

¹⁷⁷ CAC, VNST/II/1/50, Vansittart to Robin Fisher, 23 May 1950; Vansittart to Norman, 7 June 1953; Vansittart to Nicolson, 30 May 1953; Robin Fisher to Vansittart, 9 June 1953.

¹⁷⁸ NLS, Acc. 4422, Hankey-Elibank correspondence; Bodleian, MS. Eng. c. 6595, Murray to Hankey, 2 December 1946.

'... The Golden Age is Definitely Past!'¹⁷⁹

The Selby case and similar controversies over the memory of the 1930s were not the sole reminders of appeasement in the 1950s. Mandarins continued to fight the same battles in retirement as they had in office. Appeasement cast a long shadow and nowhere was this clearer than during the Suez crisis. Having spent their careers struggling against the erosion of British power, elite mandarins discovered that their efforts had been in vain.¹⁸⁰ No event so shook confidence in the State and in British power as the failure of Britain's position in the Middle East. Moreover, the Suez crisis is a particularly revealing prism through which to study officials in retirement because it represented the swansong of the interwar generation, as much as it was the British Empire's. Depressed and disillusioned by the outcome, the interwar generation withdrew from the public stage. The aftermath of the crisis also marked a turning point for the institutions and cultures which had governed the course of their lives. The 'politics of decline' bred by Suez generated a recriminatory, anguished mood which eclipsed the morbid anxiety of the pre-war and interwar years.¹⁸¹ From rising defeatism stemmed agitation for wholesale reform of the Civil Service.¹⁸²

Egypt's relationship with Britain was anomalous.¹⁸³ The Suez Canal was Egyptian and operated as a concession by the largely Anglo-French Suez Canal Company, due to expire in 1968. A 1952 revolution in Egypt brought to power military leaders, and a series of negotiations between 1952 and 1954 culminated in the termination of Britain's rule in the Sudan, and the phased evacuation of British troops from the Suez basin. Then, in July 1956, Egypt's military dictator, Gamal Abdel Nasser, nationalised the Canal. In the ensuing international crisis, unproductive diplomatic manoeuvres to reach a settlement were overtaken by more covert methods and finally the invasion of Egypt.¹⁸⁴ This expedition was almost universally condemned around the

¹⁷⁹ CAC, ACAD/1/27, 20 September 1956.

¹⁸⁰ Geoffrey K. Fry, 'Whitehall in the 1950s and 1960s', *Public Policy and Administration*, 13:2 (1998), 2-25 (2-7).

¹⁸¹ Hennessy, *Whitehall*, 171; 401.

¹⁸² Andrew Blick, *People Who Live in the Dark* (London: Politico's Publishing, 2004), 47; 27 November 1956 in Dupree (ed.), *Street Diary. Volume II*, 856.

¹⁸³ Keith Kyle's *Suez* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), remains both a comprehensive and accessible study.

¹⁸⁴ Avi Shlaim, 'The Protocol of Sèvres, 1956: Anatomy of a War Plot', *International Affairs*, 73:2 (1997), 509-530.

world, not least for the stench of treachery and deceit that surrounded its conception, and ultimately failed to bring the Canal zone back under British control.

Retired officials experienced the Suez crisis from a similar generational perspective, yet for some, this congruence was even more striking. Both Hankey and Cadogan were Directors of the Suez Canal Company, appointed through an antiquated grace-and-favour system in which appointments rested with the Prime Minister, assisted by the Permanent Secretaries of the Foreign Office and Treasury.¹⁸⁵ While Hankey campaigned vigorously for the honour, Cadogan did not, and simply celebrated that the pay of at least £3,000 a year was good compensation.¹⁸⁶ When Hankey was forced to retire as one of the Government Directors in 1948 on the grounds of age, he was re-appointed as a Commercial Director. Duties included visits to Ismailia and Cairo to meet military, political, and commercial figures, and to tour the Canal zone. There were also frequent – and inevitably dull – Directors’ meetings in London and Paris. Government Directors were responsible for keeping the British government abreast of developments and, in turn, conveying HMG’s position to the Board.¹⁸⁷ Hankey and Cadogan’s paths crossed regularly as they carried out their duties, from lunches after meetings to private gossips on ferry crossings, although Hankey’s frugal tendency to hunt for ‘obscure, and relatively cheap, restaurants’ in Paris were snobbishly observed by Cadogan, who dined at the Ritz.¹⁸⁸ Most significantly, their work with the Canal Company afforded them first-hand knowledge of Egyptian affairs. It also ensured that both possessed material financial interest in maintaining the status quo. It was therefore unsurprising that they warned of the dangers of Egyptian nationalism.¹⁸⁹

The Suez Canal Company was not the sole nexus point between ex-officials. The House of Lords was another highly important locus. During the Churchill government’s negotiations over the Sudan and Egypt in 1953 and 1954, ex-officials leveraged their insider information and collective capital to mount a struggle against what they

¹⁸⁵ CAC, STRN/4/16, Cadogan to Strang, 18 November 1950.

¹⁸⁶ Approximately £105,000 by 2020. CAC, ACAD/1/21, 17 November and 30 November 1950; CAC, HNKY/4/29, Fisher to Hankey, 23 June 1937; HNKY/3/43, Hankey to Robin Hankey, 22 April 1938; PHPP/I/3/3, Hankey to Phipps, 25 May 1938; TNA, PREM/5/160, Correspondence April and May 1938.

¹⁸⁷ For instance, CAC, ACAD/1/24, 8 May 1953; ACAD/9/7, Armstrong to Wylie, 28 November 1955; HNKY/3/47, Hankey to Henry, 9 September 1945.

¹⁸⁸ CAC, ACAD/1/26, 1 March 1955.

¹⁸⁹ CAC, ACAD/1/22, 18 December 1951; ACAD/4/6, Cadogan to unknown, 22 March 1952.

conceived of as capitulation.¹⁹⁰ A visit to Egypt in early 1953 alerted Hankey to talk of military evacuation ('operation scuttle') and he began to fear that the Sudan agreement, accepted by the Cabinet in February 1953, was a precursor to a similar surrender in Egypt. He wrote to the Prime Minister (Eden) and the Leader of the House of Lords (Lord Salisbury) to express his disquiet at allowing Egypt to seize the 'jugular vein' of the Empire.¹⁹¹ Eden's response to Hankey was only partially reassuring, as he promised that while the government had no intention of being scared from the Canal zone, it was necessary to recognise Britain's new position.¹⁹² Hankey also stirred Lord Simon, a close ally who, like Eden and Salisbury, Hankey had come to know well during the interwar and war years, and they debated whether to put down a question in the Lords.¹⁹³

These efforts to stir opposition intersected with a public letter from Miles Lampson (Lord Killearn, formerly Ambassador to Cairo) and Vansittart, which warned against further concessions to nationalists.¹⁹⁴ Vansittart, who bore deep scars and grudges from the battles over appeasement, had long-since drawn a parallel between the untrustworthy dictators of the 1930s and the Egyptian nationalist leaders.¹⁹⁵ United in their conception of the national interest which rested largely on a shared generational mindset, the trio believed that the Canal was a vital British interest and that concessions would be as fatal as those of the 1930s. Hankey collaborated with Killearn and Vansittart to plot an attack on the government from the Lords.¹⁹⁶ During a debate on 18 February 1953, Hankey remained silent at the behest of the Canal Company so as not to embarrass them, and the onus fell to Killearn and Vansittart.¹⁹⁷ Allies joined the fray, including Leo Amery – another of Hankey's old allies – who wrote on his own initiative to *The Times* and offered his son, Julian, to stir Conservative committees into action.¹⁹⁸ Hankey conceived of his position in the Lords and in public life as a duty to safeguard the

¹⁹⁰ Michael Thornhill, 'The Britain, the United States and the Rise of an Egyptian Leader: The Politics and Diplomacy of Nasser's Consolidation of Power, 1952-4', *English Historical Review*, 119:483 (2004), 892-921.

¹⁹¹ TNA, PREM/11/636, Hankey to Salisbury, 7 February 1953; Salisbury to Churchill, 9 February 1953; see also CUL, Templewood XVII/File 9, Salisbury to Templewood, 18 December 1956.

¹⁹² CAC, HNKY/15/11, Eden to Hankey, 25 February 1953.

¹⁹³ Bodleian, MS. Simon 101, Hankey to Simon, 14 February 1953; Hankey to Simon, 19 February 1953; CRL, AP/15/6/322A, Hankey to Eden, 12 April 1955.

¹⁹⁴ *The Times*, 16 January 1953.

¹⁹⁵ Robert Vansittart, *The Mist Procession: The Autobiography of Lord Vansittart* (London: Hutchinson, 1958), 407.

¹⁹⁶ CAC, HNKY/14/25, Vansittart to Hankey, 12 February 1953; Killearn to Hankey, 15 February 1953.

¹⁹⁷ Hansard, House of Lords Debates, Fifth Series, vol. 180, cols. 509-512, 18 February 1953; *The Times*, 12 March 1953.

¹⁹⁸ CAC, HNKY/14/25, Amery to Hankey, 20 February and 24 February 1953.

national interest. Similarly, Vansittart always envisaged his position in the Lords as a 'defender of the faith' and 'spokesman for the profession' of diplomacy.¹⁹⁹

Throughout 1953, Hankey and Vansittart spearheaded opposition. Hankey crowed that in demonstrating the great danger of appeasing the Egyptians and the strength of feeling against doing so, he had altered the course of the negotiations.²⁰⁰ Vansittart, more apprehensive of their chances of success, was right to be concerned.²⁰¹ Throughout the summer of 1952, Hankey nurtured his 'inside' sources and kept a watchful eye on the situation. His source was his eldest son, Robin, who had been sent to Cairo as Chargé d'Affaires and instructed by Churchill to be a 'patient, sulky pig'.²⁰² The Foreign Office and Service Departments envisioned an agreement in which Britain could redeploy its 80,000 troops (which cost £50 million a year) to more pressing theatres, while securing Egyptian agreement on other issues.²⁰³ Robin Hankey admitted that the only alternative to agreement was coercion and although Hankey dubbed his son a 'defeatist', Robin attempted to draw the Permanent Under-Secretary's attention to the duplicitousness of Egyptian leaders and to stress that Britain would not be able to trust the Egyptians to honour agreements.²⁰⁴ In September, as the prospect of an agreement loomed, Hankey wrote again to Salisbury, warning of the dangers.²⁰⁵

Hankey and Vansittart also attempted to enlarge their network of opposition. Cadogan refused to be stirred into action, for just as in the 1930s, he could discern no alternative solution.²⁰⁶ Similarly, William Strang refused to join the network, while Ernle Chatfield was equally disappointing.²⁰⁷ The trio of Hankey, Vansittart, and Killearn wrote again to *The Times*; their letter animated further opposition to the government's attitude, and the formation of a pressure group under Amery.²⁰⁸ Hankey, Vansittart and Killearn acted as an inner-Cabinet, coordinating their attacks on the government in the Lords. In a stormy debate on 17 December 1953, a large group of influential, reputable

¹⁹⁹ CAC, STRN/4/8, Vansittart to Strang, 15 March 1956.

²⁰⁰ CAC, HNKY/3/54, Hankey to sons, February and March 1953.

²⁰¹ CAC, HNKY/14/25, Vansittart to Hankey, 2 March 1953.

²⁰² TNA, FO/371/102765/JE1052/121G, Hankey minute, 22 May 1953; for details into Churchill's attitude and Hankey's mission, see Thornhill, 'Nasser's Consolidation of Power', 907-911.

²⁰³ CAC, HNKY/14/26, Robin's letters, 9 June, 28 June, and 27 July 1953.

²⁰⁴ CAC, HNKY/14/26, Maurice Hankey to Robin Hankey, 17 June 1953; Robin Hankey to Maurice Hankey, 30 August 1953; Maurice Hankey to Robin Hankey, 17 October and 19 October 1953.

²⁰⁵ CAC, HNKY/15/11, Hankey's memorandum and letter to Salisbury, 5 September 1953; Salisbury to Hankey, 16 September 1953.

²⁰⁶ CAC, HNKY/14/25, Maurice Hankey to Robin Hankey, 25 September 1953

²⁰⁷ CAC, HNKY/14/25, Chatfield-Hankey correspondence, 27 and 29 September 1953.

²⁰⁸ *The Times*, 24 September 1953.

'Elder Statesmen' attached to the network spearheaded by the trio of ex-mandarins attacked government policy.²⁰⁹ The trio of agitators had pooled their credentials as respectable 'Elder Statesmen' – a former Ambassador to Egypt who had negotiated the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, a former Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office who had warned of the dangers in the 1930s of appeasing untrustworthy dictators, and a former Cabinet Secretary who had long been involved in the work of the Committee of Imperial Defence. To these credentials was added the status and megaphone of a seat in the Lords, and access to editors of the national press. Moreover, such ex-officials could also call on personal and professional networks developed years earlier, including both current and retired ministers and backbench MPs. However, despite being richly endowed with resources, the mandarins were unable to prevent British 'surrender'. Although they were heartened when negotiations were abandoned in March 1954, talks resumed in the summer and an agreement was reached, including the withdrawal of British forces by June 1956.²¹⁰ The weight of the mandarins' network could not compete with the reality that waning British power necessitated an agreement.

The crisis in the Near East soon reared its ugly head again. Following the nationalisation of the Canal in July 1956, Hankey and Cadogan were closely involved in the work of the Canal Company.²¹¹ The Company initially favoured ordering its non-Egyptian staff to cease work to disrupt traffic through the Canal. However, Britain required oil supplies and insisted that the Canal must remain operational. At a series of Company meetings, Hankey and Cadogan mediated and steered the Company towards the British government's position. During the summer of 1956, both Directors of the Company held high-level meetings with officials and ministers to discuss the status of the defunct Canal Company. While Directors insisted that the concession must be re-established once order had been restored in the Canal zone, the British government preferred the creation of an international organisation which would be untainted by notions of 'imperialism' and colonialism'.²¹² Efforts to salvage the future of the Canal Company were futile. Hankey and Cadogan found themselves firmly outside

²⁰⁹ CAC, HNKY/14/25, Vansittart to Hankey, 5 December 1953; Hansard, House of Lords Debates, Fifth Series, vol. 185, cols. 189-258, 17 December 1953.

²¹⁰ *The Times*, 10 July and 29 July 1954; PREM/11/636, Lloyd to Prime Minister, 13 July 1954; CAC, HNKY/3/55, Conversation with Eden, 23 March 1954.

²¹¹ TNA, PREM/11/1131 and PREM/11/1283; succinctly explained by Cadogan in CAC, ACAD/1/27, August 1956. See also CAC, ACAD/9/4, Wylie to Watson, 7 August 1956; ACAD/9/9; ACAD/1/27.

²¹² CAC, HNKY/3/57, Maurice Hankey to Robin Hankey, 25 August 1956.

policymaking and advisory circles and with insider sources of information closed to them.²¹³

However, as Chairman of the BBC Board of Governors, Cadogan was intimately involved in debates surrounding the presentation of policy.²¹⁴ He had been a 'shocking' choice as Chairman – not being 'TV-minded' – and his tenure was not without criticism.²¹⁵ Cadogan's involvement in broadcasting during the Suez crisis must be contextualised within the government's obsession with propaganda, and his longstanding warm relationship with Eden. Cadogan was no fool: years of working with Eden at the Foreign Office instilled in Cadogan a hyperawareness of Eden's foibles, from his tendency to lie to his vanity and his constant urge to 'do something'. Tony Shaw is thus wrong to claim that Cadogan 'trusted Eden's judgement in foreign affairs implicitly' and overstates the extent to which Cadogan danced to Eden's tune during the crisis.²¹⁶

Instead, Cadogan trod a thin line, and his actions were based to a considerable extent on consistent principles regarding broadcasting. On 10 August, Eden rang Cadogan to complain that the Prime Minister of Australia had been refused permission to broadcast on Suez; Cadogan deferentially arranged for Robert Gordon Menzies to speak.²¹⁷ Then, No. 10 Downing Street sought to intervene in BBC programming when a talk by Salah Salem, an Egyptian nationalist, was broadcast on the eve of an international diplomatic conference.²¹⁸ Eden snootily reminded BBC Governors to bear in mind their responsibilities.²¹⁹ Cadogan disputed the validity of Eden's criticism of the broadcast, yet agreed that the BBC would not stage such programmes while the conference was in session.²²⁰ Subsequently, a related dispute emerged over external broadcasting. No. 10 Downing Street sought to censor broadcasts in the Near East which gave the British case and 'the enemy's case' equal weight.²²¹ Although Cadogan agreed that it would be demoralising and dangerous to allow such broadcasts, he was opposed by the Board

²¹³ CAC, ACAD/1/27, November 1956 entries.

²¹⁴ David Dilks (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1938-1945* (London: Cassell, 1971), 796-799.

²¹⁵ 20 July 1952 in Stuart (ed.), *Reith Diaries*, 483; CAC, ACAD/1/27, 26 December 1956; ACAD/1/23 and ACAD 1/24; *The Times*, 15 November 1956, 3 May 1957, and 10 July 1968.

²¹⁶ Tony Shaw, 'Cadogan's Last Fling: Sir Alexander Cadogan, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the BBC', *Contemporary British History*, 13:2 (1999), 126-145 (127; 138).

²¹⁷ CAC, ACAD/1/27, 10 August 1956.

²¹⁸ Kyle, *Suez*, 191.

²¹⁹ TNA, PREM/11/1089A, Eden to Cadogan, 16 August 1956.

²²⁰ Shaw played down the rebuttal, 'Cadogan's Last Fling', 137; TNA, PREM/11/1089A, Cadogan to Eden, 17 August 1956.

²²¹ TNA, PREM/11/1089A, W.D.C. to Eden, 17 August 1956.

which emphasised the BBC's responsibility to inform.²²² Furthermore, Cadogan was also involved in clarifying the BBC's rules of reply to ministerial broadcasts. When Eden addressed the nation in what he claimed was an 'uncontroversial' broadcast and which should not therefore qualify for a right of reply from the Opposition, Cadogan defied Eden and authorised Hugh Gaitskell to broadcast. This was not so altruistic. Cadogan hoped that, given enough rope, Gaitskell would hang himself, and was thoroughly satisfied with the Labour leader's 'disgraceful' speech.²²³ Cadogan therefore veered between deference and independence, neither Eden's stooge, nor a champion of impartiality. He was a product of his time and dominant institutional culture, not least the belief that media intrusion upset political and diplomatic processes, and his deep distaste for 'politicking' during a national crisis.

The parallels to the 1930s weighed heavily in the minds of Vansittart and Hankey, but also of Cadogan, Eden, the Foreign Office, and Churchill – who once declared that any such defeat would be 'Munich on the Nile'.²²⁴ During the Suez crisis in the summer of 1956, Hankey and Vansittart supported a firm line against Egyptian nationalists and returned to their activities in the Lords.²²⁵ As the crisis deepened, they raged against the government's disastrous mistakes; having supported the 'brilliant' landings at Port Said, they railed against the United Nation's (UN) interference, Eden and Lloyd's 'incompetence', and the outcome of 'maximum odium and minimum result'.²²⁶ Cadogan shared these views and deplored the handling of the crisis; he felt that Eden, Ivone Kirkpatrick (the Permanent Under-Secretary), and the Foreign Office had made grave errors of judgement. However, Cadogan sought to influence high policymaking only once during the crisis. Although encouraged by friends to write to *The Times* with his views, Cadogan preferred a discrete approach. He wrote privately to R.A. Butler (Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons), with whom he had worked closely, advising how to exploit loopholes in the UN (which Cadogan thought a 'waste of time a parody') to secure British interests.²²⁷ This late attempt at securing derivative influence does not even appear to have elicited an acknowledgement. It is

²²² Shaw, 'Cadogan's Last Fling', 139.

²²³ Kyle, *Suez*, 432; CAC, ACAD/1/27, 13 September – 4 November 1956.

²²⁴ 29 January 1953 in Evelyn Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez: Diaries 1951-56* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), 75; CAC, HNKY/14/26, Maurice Hankey to Robin Hankey, 10 September 1953; see particularly Ann Lane's analysis of Munich hauntings, 'The Past as Matrix: Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs', *Contemporary British History*, 13:2 (1999), 199-220.

²²⁵ Hansard, House of Lords Debates, Fifth Series, vol. 199, cols. 727-858, 13 September 1956.

²²⁶ CAC, HNKY/3/57, Maurice Hankey to Robin Hankey, 18 November 1956.

²²⁷ CAC, ACAD/1/15, 24 November 1945; ACAD/1/27, 10 September, 20 November, and 21 November 1956; ACAD/4/6, Cadogan to Butler, 21 November 1956.

striking that one of the greatest 'villains' in the story of appeasement enjoyed his only fling on the public stage during the Suez crisis. Horace Wilson stepped out of the shadows to champion his MP, Nigel Nicolson, after Nicolson disagreed with the government's policy and was threatened with deselection. Without a hint of irony, Wilson defended Nicolson and called for resistance against 'subservience and dictators'.²²⁸

Elderly mandarins did not escape unscathed from the trauma of the Suez crisis. Vansittart suffered from heart trouble and depression brought on by Eden's handling of the crisis.²²⁹ Having experienced the disaster of the interwar years, Vansittart experienced another crisis of British external policy before his death in February 1957. He also lived long enough to witness the humbling of an old adversary when Eden was toppled in January 1957. Similarly, the strain of the crisis ruined Hankey's health. He continued to campaign for the rights of the Canal Company into 1957, especially for financial compensation, although after his 'heartbreak' over the 'surrender' at Suez, he was 'never the same again'. Slowing 'almost to a standstill', he withdrew from public life and buried himself in an obsessive frenzy writing an extensive and damning account of the government's handling of the crisis.²³⁰ Cadogan was also thoroughly depressed by the Suez crisis. It compounded his doubts as to the unworkability of the UN and erased all doubts that Britain's global position was in permanent decline. His tenures at the BBC and the defunct Canal Company lapsed in 1957 and Cadogan retreated from public life.

What is perhaps most notable is the absence of dialogue between serving and retired officials during the drawn-out crisis in Anglo-Egyptian relations. Brook did not consult Hankey on War Book procedures as the crisis deepened; he was an expert himself, having operated and subsequently reformed the War Book. Kirkpatrick did not turn to Vansittart or Cadogan for advice, and with one exception – when Cadogan attempted to elicit from Kirkpatrick insider information – nor did they approach him. Permanent Secretaries were exceptionally busy in the summer and autumn of 1956. The activities of these officials have already received considerable scholarly interest, although the contributions of Brook and Kirkpatrick will merit further study as more sources are released. Brook was a crucial figure, and his actions tended closer to those of a minister than a civil servant; he was one of Eden's closest advisors, knew more of

²²⁸ *The Times*, 15 February 1957.

²²⁹ CAC, STRN/4/8, Vansittart to Strang, 22 October 1956.

²³⁰ CAC, ROSK/7/80, Christopher to Roskill, 3 May 1973; ACAD/1/28, 4 January 1957; HNKY/15/17, *Suez Memoir*.

the secret machinations than almost any other figure, and worked to erase traces of collusion.²³¹ Kirkpatrick was also in the inner circle.²³² As Ann Lane demonstrates, Kirkpatrick encouraged Eden, diverted flows of information to exclude the Foreign Office, and acted as Eden's draftsman, all while in the grip of a Munich complex, whereby haunting memories of appeasement coloured his perceptions.²³³ In contrast, Bridges was excluded from the inner circle. Unlike his juniors (Brook and Kirkpatrick), Bridges had once been a member of the interwar elite. On the brink of retirement, he suffered much the same fate as his interwar colleagues.²³⁴ Bridges urged caution during the crisis and unsuccessfully pressed his Chancellor, Macmillan, to confront 'uncomfortable' questions concerning armed operations. He was ignored.²³⁵

The chasm between serving and retired officials is telling. That ex-officials targeted Salisbury, Eden, Lloyd, and Butler rather than Permanent Secretaries reveals three fundamental truths. Firstly, these officials continued to regard themselves as having lifelong responsibility for the national interest. Secondly, in retirement, they raised themselves above the status of their old departments and colleagues as important Directors, Lords, and public figures. They thus placed themselves on comparable footing to the leading politicians of the day and expected to be heard. This self-fashioning as 'Elder Statesmen' was deliberate and an important aspect of their capital. Access to information, relationships with ministers, and contacts across political and press circles were also vital tools in their quest for influence. Thirdly, ex-mandarins recognised that they could only derive influence from ministers. They therefore sought to tap straight into the source of power in the central state, as they had so often attempted during their days in Whitehall. However, ex-officials failed to leverage this bounty of resources into influence over government policy. Those who hoped to preserve the status quo failed to confront the uncomfortable reality that the centre of gravity had shifted from Whitehall to Washington, and from the Cabinet to Cairo.

²³¹ Ian Beesley, *The Official History of the Cabinet Secretaries* (London: Routledge, 2017), especially 135-145; Keith Kyle, 'The Mandarins' Mandarin: Sir Norman Brook, Secretary of the Cabinet', *Contemporary British History*, 13:2 (1999), 64-78; David Carlton, *Britain and the Suez Crisis* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 59; Jonathan Pearson, *Sir Anthony Eden and the Suez Crisis: Reluctant Gamble* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), especially 304; 115; 167-172; Peter J. Beck, "'The Less Said About Suez the Better': British Governments and the Politics of Suez's History, 1956-67", *English Historical Review*, 124:508 (2009), 605-640; TNA, PREM/11/2653, Brook to Macmillan, 5 March 1959; Brook, 'The Origins of the Suez Episode'; Bodleian, MS. Eng. lett. c. 273, Eden to Brook, 16 January 1957.

²³² For example, TNA, PREM/11/1098 and PREM 11/1104.

²³³ Lane, 'The Past as Matrix', 199-220.

²³⁴ TNA, T/273/380, Bridges's correspondence, August 1956; Chapman, *Ethics*, 314.

²³⁵ TNA, T/273/380, Bridges to Maude, 15 August 1956; Macmillan to Bridges, 16 August 1956.

Conclusion

Collective biography of the last stages of officials' careers enhances and nuances our understanding of Whitehall and of this generation. It demonstrates that despite dominant narratives to the contrary, promotions to, and departures from, the Permanent Secretary post were subject to ministerial interference. Permanent Secretaries' stage exits could be disorderly affairs, driven not by the rhythms of retirement age but instead by ministers' (dis)regard for their advisors. This revelation greatly calls into question the extent to which elite officials could operate free from fear or favour.²³⁶

Retirement was inevitable in every mandarin's career. Retirement from the stresses, frustrations, and sometimes even the toxicity of the corridors of power was often a relief. Yet it was rarely a final 'stage exit'. After leaving their grand offices, retired officials often vested themselves in new clothes and once more took their cues onto the public stage for the second act in the play. Just as before, there was a script to follow. Retired mandarins were closely observed, and their "afterlives" were governed by codes and expectations to protect the Establishment from criticism.

Nowhere was this clearer than in the codes which regulated public statements. The rules were clear: they were to speak from the script or to remain silent. Deference and discretion underpinned majority acquiescence to such principles or, at least, only covert and minor resistance. In chronicling their work and world, many ex-mandarins conformed to a dominant narrative, whether in writing memoirs or assisting historians. There were things which would not and could not be said, and things which they were and were not comfortable revealing. The truth was to be known only to insiders, while outsiders were to be kept on the periphery. Hankey and Vansittart's publishing activities in retirement also demonstrate the considerable extent to which officialdom sought means of preserving closed government. Those who sought to obscure the world of Whitehall, either as censors, memoirists, or "anonymous sources", excelled as gatekeepers of contemporary history. Historians fell into this trap and often became officials' handmaidens in ingraining such deep-seated narratives and assumptions that

²³⁶ Implied by Lord Bancroft in Peter Hennessy, *The Hidden Wiring: Unearthing the British Constitution* (London: Indigo, 1996), 130.

it proved difficult to dislodge lingering myths and misperceptions even after archives had been opened and the hidden transcripts had emerged decades later. These hidden transcripts were not published memoirs, but instead censored passages excised from memoirs, indiscrete diary confessions, or gossipy recollections shared between reminiscing ex-colleagues.²³⁷ Pieced together, these hidden transcripts are a rubric to understand the interwar generation and their world – and the means of dispelling the dense mythology cloaking the corridors of power.

The second act in the play was no triumphant finale and it was in the mid-1950s that the curtain began to fall. The Suez crisis marked the ‘stage exit left’ for the interwar generation. Ex-mandarins who sought to leverage their public platforms and resources into influence as respected Elder Statesmen found their paths obstructed. They discovered that, despite their impressive titles, there was little constructive influence outside the citadel. This is not surprising given the considerable difficulties they had faced in wielding influence from *within* Whitehall’s walls. Indeed, their attempt to influence policy was arguably destined to fail. Moreover, whether or not they were truly cognisant of the fact, they were no longer in their prime. They had obsolesced alongside Britain’s crumbling global position. They were relics of a bygone age and out of step with the new Cold War world. They were disoriented and depressed by the version of modernity confronting them as morbid anxieties of the interwar years morphed from haunting nightmare to inescapable reality. Ultimately, impotent ex-mandarins could only observe from the stands as vestiges of their work and world were swept away.

²³⁷ Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains: In Search of the German Occupation, 1940-1945* (London: Macmillan, 2002), 11.

Conclusion

*... the secret of my influence has always been that it remained secret ...*¹

This thesis has penetrated the darkness of the mandarins' world. The darkness was the deliberate product of official narratives. The more insiders spoke and wrote of Whitehall, the less historians knew. Official narratives misdirected and even constrained interpretations of the Civil Service elite. As memoirists and chroniclers, censors and gatekeepers, senior mandarins were remarkably successful in steering interpretations of their world.

Such opacity stirred Weberian suspicions surrounding the conduct and power of senior officials.² Yet the elite persisted in the secrecy and misdirection for several important reasons. Secrecy was inseparable from the notion of closed government – believed by many to be the highest and most efficient form of governance.³ Most fundamentally, secrecy was maintained to protect individuals from criticism. The obfuscation of Whitehall was not designed to hide corruption. Nor was it to conceal omnipotence, such as that suggested by Tony Benn when he claimed that Britain was 'governed by the Prime Minister and the permanent secretaries'.⁴ Yet it is not wholly correct to think of the interwar elite in such 'Sir Humphrey' terms. Certainly, the smartly dressed and smooth talking, well-educated Sir Humphrey of the 1980s comedy series *Yes Minister* mirrored the gender, class, and professional identities of the earlier generation. There were also outward similarities in their love of 'gongs' and haughty tendencies. The interwar Whitehall elite, however, were not Sir Humphreys: while they could be obstructive, they were never powerful.

¹ Salvador Dalí, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* (New York: Dial Press, 1942), chapter 11.

² Franz Kafka, *The Castle*, a new translation by Anthea Bell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 edition); Peter Barberis, *The Elite of the Elite: Permanent Secretaries in the British Higher Civil Service* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1996), xvi.

³ C.K. Munro, *The Fountains in Trafalgar Square: Some Reflections on the Civil Service* (London: William Heinemann, 1952), 2-3.

⁴ Barberis, *Elite of the Elite*, xv-xvi.

The extent to which mandarins possessed power is one of the hardest challenges in the study of Whitehall.⁵ Power is difficult to identify and measure, and this is particularly true of those who operated behind the scenes. Peter Barberis was right to assert that no individual civil servant 'ever singlehandedly engaged or monopolised access to the levers of power'.⁶ Peter Hennessy was likewise correct when he concluded that the power of senior mandarins waxed and waned.⁷ Yet, such remarks are not particularly revealing. Indeed, they confuse 'power' with 'influence', as the Civil Service did not possess power to coerce or command. Although vague assertions that 'proximity is power' are catchy, more perceptive scholars have sounded the alarm at such approaches and generalisations because to 'have the ear of the powerful is not necessarily to influence the mind behind it'.⁸ The study of power is greatly enriched by distinguishing between forms of influence and by examining a range of contexts.

Case studies examined in this thesis have demonstrated the maximum limits of officials' capabilities. Civil Service influence was most apparent in obstruction. Veering close to the Weberian nightmare, the Channel Tunnel case study demonstrates that obstructive influence was real and can be studied successfully. However, in totality, the evidence suggests that the Whitehall elite possessed less systemic influence than first imagined. Their contributions were small and isolated. They were not *éminences grises*.

In the promotions process, it was ministers and not officials who were 'kingmakers'. The influence of the Head of the Civil Service has been over-exaggerated, and mandarins rarely succeeded against ministers when the selection process was contentious. Officials were chosen because of their skills and expertise, their utility and affability, although meritocracy was linked closely to class and social privilege. Most importantly, ambitious officials required good connections and powerful political patrons. There was a strong culture of political influence in the informal promotions process. This was almost equally true at the end of mandarins' careers. Despite claims of being free from fear or favour, ministers could and did intervene in the careers of

⁵ Max Beloff, 'The Whitehall Factor: The Role of the Higher Civil Service 1919-39', in *The Politics of Reappraisal, 1918-1939*, edited by Gillian Peele and Chris Cook (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1975), 209-231 (211); Anthony Seldon and Jonathan Meakin, *The Cabinet Office, 1916-2016: The Birth of Modern Government* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2016), xx-xxiii.

⁶ Barberis, *Elite of the Elite*, 19; see also Peter Barberis, 'Permanent Secretaries and Policy-Making in the 1980s', *Public Policy and Administration*, 9:1 (1994), 35-48 (37-38).

⁷ Peter Hennessy, *Who Governs Britain?* (London: W.H. Smith, 1992), 17.

⁸ Seldon and Meakin, *Cabinet Office*, xxii; C.I. Hamilton, 'The Decline of Churchill's 'Garden Suburb' and Rise of his Private Office: The Prime Minister's Department, 1940-45', *Twentieth Century British History*, 12:2 (2001), 133-162 (139).

officials to punish and isolate them. Mandarins were thus dependent on politicians for both promotion and longevity in office.

The weak influence of Permanent Secretaries was also clear in the arena of constructive influence. This was evident in the administrative sphere, where officials could devise, but rarely implement, reforms without ministers' approval. It was also true of collective efforts to change policy. The case study of the Defence Requirements Committee is particularly revealing in its exposition of collective influence and its limits. Moreover, the case of the Suez crisis further demonstrates the difficulties encountered in attempting to wield constructive influence, even as decorated and respected Elder Statesmen with a wealth of resources networks.

This investigation of influence also reveals a distinction between Permanent Secretaries. There were two types of senior officials. There were those, such as Fisher, Wilson, Hankey, and Vansittart, who repeatedly explored the limits of their influence, whether in defence, foreign, or domestic policy. They frequently and forcefully pursued a particular policy course and sought to manipulate the levers of power to achieve their goals. Yet not all Permanent Secretaries were equally willing to press against the constraints of their offices to the same degree. From Alexander Cadogan to Richard Hopkins, most Permanent Secretaries presented a range of policy options, supported a particular course of action, and so advised the minister but did not expend vast energy or cunning to secure their preferred outcome if ministers were reticent. It is therefore important to be sceptical of charges of exceptionally influential civil servants, and to carefully conceptualise different forms of power. Civil Service influence is ultimately at greater risk of being overemphasised than underestimated.

One of the most important themes threaded throughout this thesis is that all forms of influence were cooperative and based on dependencies. Individual mandarins were relatively weak. Decision-making and influence can therefore only be studied with a wide angled lens to capture relationships, interactions, and networks. Relations and personalities mattered a great deal.⁹ Senior officials cultivated ministers and fellow mandarins as patrons and allies. The necessity of collaboration was clear, and the art of diplomacy was crucial in managing relationships.¹⁰ At the same time, elite officials are

⁹ Seldon and Meakin, *Cabinet Office*, xxiii.

¹⁰ Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets. Volume II, 1919-1931* (London: Collins, 1972), 574-575; Michael L. Roi, *Alternative to Appeasement: Sir Robert Vansittart and Alliance Diplomacy, 1934-1937* (London: Praeger, 1997), 4.

perhaps best described as a 'team of rivals' because relations were not always harmonious.¹¹ Rivalries, jealousies, and tensions simmered under the surface, often heightened by policy disputes and personality clashes. Rivalries and quiet antagonism could cause friction within departments. Within the Cabinet Office, Hankey and his deputy juggled a relationship which was simultaneously friendly and full of 'resentment', while at the Foreign Office, Crowe and Hardinge jostled for prime position, as did Vansittart and Cadogan.¹² Interdepartmental strife and territorial disputes also accentuated rivalries, such as Fisher and Hankey's clash over the future of the Cabinet Secretariat in 1922, and the way in which Horace Wilson's activities in foreign affairs brought him into conflict with Vansittart.¹³

Mandarins took great care in managing their relationships with politicians. Although apolitical chameleons who had to serve governments of all colours and composition, mandarins' interactions with ministers were complex. Often senior officials became close to ministers. Yet they were not handmaidens. Indeed, several senior officials were not averse to pursuing their own goals, even if this required working against their minister. Inexperienced ministers or those without a clear agenda often found themselves falling prey more easily to the machinations of ambitious senior officials. However, civil servants preferred powerful ministers who were most likely to be able to realise their goals. The most potent combination was a powerful and central department working alongside a talented and ambitious minister.

The thesis does not seek to apply historical conclusions to the current Whitehall elite: the Georgian age has passed, and the modern day is different. Government is more open, senior mandarins are recruited more widely, they are trained by different means, fulfil different functions, and exist in a world which has transformed beyond recognition in a century. Yet there are important universal lessons to be distilled on the nature of power and influence and on group cultures. In contrast to many previous interpretations of the Whitehall elite and the nature of decision-making, the thesis reflects on the fundamental interconnectedness of the governing elite, the importance of dependencies, and thus the need to examine networks or clusters rather than

¹¹ Borrowed from Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (London: Penguin, 2009); Clive Ponting, *Whitehall: Tragedy and Farce* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1986), 97.

¹² E.L. Ellis, *T.J.: A Life of Dr Thomas Jones* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992), 187-193; CAC, ROSK/7/80, Robin's notes, undated; ACAD/8/1, 21 January 1938.

¹³ John F. Naylor, *A Man and an Institution: Sir Maurice Hankey, the Cabinet Secretariat and the Custody of Cabinet Secrecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 99-107; TNA, CAB/127/158, Wilson on Munich, October 1941.

individuals. Moreover, it demonstrates the limited influence of the Whitehall elite, and unpicks the nuances of this influence by carefully conceptualising collective and derivative influence, as well as obstructive and constructive influence.

These findings also establish clear lines for further enquiry. It would be possible to pursue similar studies hinged around a different cohort – either more junior mandarins drawn from the same generation, or a later generation of Permanent Secretaries, and perhaps even senior officials beyond the British Isles. Such a study would aid in determining whether this cohort was exceptional, and the extent to which seniority, formative experiences, and even national cultures moulded groups.

This thesis has focused on the interwar generation. Born as Victorians and shaped by the Edwardian age, they lived as Georgians. The Georgian style was male, middle-class, white, Christian, and fundamentally conservative. Their style was not wholly uniform, although diversity was constrained within narrow limits. They were not identical or bland automatons, yet they were soaked in dominant cultures and in turn began to shape the institution with their values, assumptions, and modes of thought. The interwar mandarins were not famous faces, but they were particularly well-known to junior civil servants.¹⁴ To those who followed in their footsteps, they were the towering figures of the ‘old school’ and ‘great personalities’ who left deep footprints in the sands of Horse Guards Parade.¹⁵ Although giant or dominant *personalities*, this thesis demonstrates that they did not dominate decision-making. The mythology and darkness surrounding the Whitehall elite has hitherto concealed the relative lack of influence, rather than omnipotence, of senior civil servants.

This thesis tells the story of the heyday of officialdom, when the Civil Service became larger and was run by men who enjoyed longevity in office, and before the institution was captured by reforms, the cult of managerialism, and demands for more open, more transparent government. Yet this was not a ‘golden age’. Senior officials were gripped by a morbid sense that ruin was upon them as imperial, class, and gender predominance were challenged. Mandarins struggled to accept the version of modernity confronting them, even though the threat to their position was more imagined than real. It was only after their retirement that their fears were realised. The heyday of

¹⁴ Rodney Lowe, ‘Bureaucracy Triumphant or Denied? The Expansion of the British Civil Service, 1919-1939’, *Public Administration*, 62 (1984), 291-310 (291; 309).

¹⁵ Bodleian, MS. Eng. misc. c. 489, Dinner for Edward Bridges, 6 December 1956; Kevin Theakston, *Leadership in Whitehall* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 69.

officialdom sank into the horizon at the same time as the British Empire, bringing about the twilight of the world which the interwar Whitehall elite had both inhabited and shaped. One of the most captivating novels on the British state in the twentieth century remains John le Carré's *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*. Le Carré's work rings true, especially in emphasising the Suez crisis as the rupture between old and new worlds.¹⁶ However, while the villain of the tale, 'an Empire baby, ... [born] to rule', reacted to 'all his toys ... being taken away by history' by betraying his country, ageing Georgian giants sank into a mire of nostalgia, disorientation, and depression.¹⁷ It fell to their successors to wrestle with the challenges of the new world: economic crises, the aftermath of imperial decline, and the shadow of the nuclear age.

¹⁶ Albert Camus believed that 'fiction is the lie through which we tell the truth'.

¹⁷ Matthew J. Bruccoli and Judith S. Baughman (eds), *Conversations with John Le Carré* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), 62.

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CAB/15: Committee of Imperial Defence, Committee on the Coordination of Departmental Action on the Outbreak of War, and War Cabinet, War Priorities Committee – Minutes, Papers, and War Books

CAB/16: Committee of Imperial Defence, Ad Hoc Sub-Committees – Minutes, Memoranda, and Reports

CAB/21: Cabinet Office and Predecessors – Registered Files (1916-1965)

CAB/23: War Cabinet and Cabinet - Minutes

CAB/24: War Cabinet and Cabinet – Memoranda (GT, CP, and G War Series)

CAB/27: War Cabinet and Cabinet – Miscellaneous Committees, Records (General Series)

CAB/29: Cabinet Office – International Conferences, Minutes and Papers

CAB/32: Cabinet Office – Imperial and Imperial War Conferences, Minutes and Memoranda

CAB/38: Committee of Imperial Defence – Photographic Copies of Minutes and Memoranda

CAB/42: War Council and Successors – Photographic Copies of Minutes and Papers

CAB/46: Committee of Imperial Defence – Air Raid Precautions, Minutes and Memoranda (ARP Series)

CAB/53: Committee of Imperial Defence – Chiefs of Staff Committee, Minutes and Memoranda

CAB/58: Committee of Civil Research (later Economic Advisory Council and Sub-Committees) – Minutes and Memoranda (CR, EAC, and other series)

CAB/63: Lord Hankey – Papers

CAB/104: Cabinet Office and Predecessors – Supplementary Registered Files (1923-1951)

CAB/127: Private Collections of Ministers' and Officials' Papers

CAB/175: War Books

CAB/195: Cabinet Secretary's Notebooks

Foreign Office

FO/366: Records of the Chief Clerk's Department and its successors

FO/370: Library and the Research Department – General Correspondence from 1906

FO/371: Political Departments – General Correspondence from 1906-1966

FO/800: Private Offices – Various Ministers' and Officials' Papers

Home Office

HO/45: Registered Papers

HO/144: Registered Papers – Supplementary

HO/186: Minister of Home Security – Air Raid Precautions Registered Files

HO/205: Minister of Home Security – 'O' Division, Correspondence and Papers

Lord Chancellor's Office

LCO/2: Registered Files

Ramsay MacDonald's Papers

PRO/30/69: Papers of James Ramsay MacDonald and Predecessors and Successors, including correspondence and political papers

Prime Minister's Office

PREM/1: Correspondence and Papers, 1916-1940

PREM/5: Patronage Papers

PREM/8: Correspondence and Papers, 1945-1951

PREM/11: Correspondence and Papers, 1951-1964

Treasury

T/1: Treasury Board Papers and In-Letters

T/161: Supply Department – Registered Files (S Series)

T/162: Establishments Department – Registered Files (E Series)

T/165: Blue Notes

T/169: Royal Commission on the Civil Service (Tomlin Commission) – Minutes and Memoranda

T/172: Chancellor of the Exchequer's Office – Miscellaneous Papers

T/175: Papers of Sir Richard Hopkins

T/186: Papers of Sir Samuel Hardman Lever

T/199: Establishment Officer's Branch – Registered Files (E0 and 2E0 Series)

T/215: Establishment General Division – Registered Files (EG and 2EG Series)

T/220: Imperial and Foreign Division – Registered Files (IF Series)

T/224: Agriculture, Transport and Trade Division – Registered Files (AT and 2AT Series)

T/268: Selected Personal Files

T/273: Papers of Lord Bridges

T/281: Board of Enquiry Appointed by the Prime Minister to Investigate Certain Statements Affecting Civil Servants (Fisher Enquiry) – Records

War Office

WO/32: Registered Files (General Series)

WO/190: Directorate of Military Operations and Intelligence – German and Adjacent Countries Military Situation Reports (Appreciation Files)

2. Private Papers

This list is organised alphabetically by surname. It utilises the collection names and class mark descriptions which appear in the repository catalogues for ease of finding.

ADDISON - The Papers of Paul Addison (unarchived material, in the possession of Rosemary Addison)

AMERY - The Papers of Julian Amery (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

AMEJ/2: Correspondence, 1940-1996

AMERY - The Papers of Leopold Amery (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

AMEL/2: Correspondence, 1892-1964

ANDERSON - Papers of Ava Anderson, Viscount Waverley, 1938-1975 (Bodleian Library, Oxford)

MS. Eng. c. 6661: Manuscript diary notes, 1940-1958

ANDERSON - Additional Papers of Ava Anderson, Viscount Waverley, and miscellaneous papers of John Anderson, 1st Viscount Waverley, 1907-1974 (Bodleian Library, Oxford)

MS. Eng. c. 7208: General correspondence, 1915-1945

MS. Eng. c. 7214: Correspondence and papers of John Anderson, 1913-1957

MS. Eng. c. 7216: Correspondence with the Anderson family and research correspondence concerning Sir John Wheeler-Bennett's biography of John Anderson, 1958-1962

MS. Eng. c. 7217: Research correspondence concerning Sir John Wheeler-Bennett's biography of John Anderson, 1960-1963

MS. Eng. d. 3632: Correspondence between Sir John Anderson and Ava, Lady Anderson, 1941-1946

ANDERSON - Papers of Sir John Anderson, 1st Viscount Waverley (British Library, London)

MSS Eur F 207: Papers concerning the career of Sir John Anderson

ASQUITH – Archive of Herbert Henry Asquith, 1st Earl of Oxford and Asquith (Bodleian Library, Oxford)

MS. Asquith 82: Various Bills, Reports, etc, 1901-1924

ATTLEE – Papers of Clement Richard Attlee, 1st Earl Attlee (Bodleian Library, Oxford)

Attlee/Dep. 18: Correspondence and papers, May-August 1945

Attlee/Dep. 19: Correspondence and papers, August 1945

Attlee/Dep. 34: Correspondence and papers, March-April 1946

Attlee/Dep. 46: Correspondence and papers, November 1946

ATTLEE – The Papers of Clement Attlee, Earl Attlee (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

ATLE/2: Correspondence, 1932-1949

BALDWIN – The Political Papers of Stanley Baldwin, First Earl Baldwin of Bewdley (Cambridge University Library, Cambridge)

Baldwin 1: Home Affairs – Defence

Baldwin 2: Home Affairs – Defence

Baldwin 8: Home Affairs – Finance

Baldwin 15: Home Affairs – Labour, Trade, etc.

Baldwin 18: Home Affairs – Labour, Trade, etc.

Baldwin 22: Home Affairs – Labour, Trade, etc.

Baldwin 23: Home Affairs – Labour, Trade, etc.

Baldwin 121: Foreign Affairs Series B

Baldwin 122: Foreign Affairs Series B

Baldwin 123: Foreign Affairs Series B

Baldwin 152: Letters of Congratulation, etc.

Baldwin 153: Letters of Congratulation, etc.

Baldwin 159: Letters – General Files

Baldwin 160: Letters – General Files

Baldwin 161: Letters – General Files

Baldwin 162: Letters – General Files

Baldwin 163: Letters – General Files

Baldwin 164: Letters – General Files

Baldwin 166: Letters – General Files

Baldwin 167: Letters – General Files
Baldwin 168: Letters – General Files
Baldwin 169: Letters – General Files
Baldwin 170: Letters – General Files
Baldwin 171: Letters – General Files
Baldwin 172: Letters – General Files
Baldwin 173: Letters – General Files
Baldwin 174: Letters – General Files
Baldwin 176: “The Royal Box”
Baldwin 177: “The Royal Box”
Baldwin 178: “The Royal Box”
Baldwin 176-178: Excerpts from “The Royal Box”
Baldwin 234: Letter from General Correspondents
Baldwin 249: Miscellaneous Papers of Stanley Baldwin

BALDWIN – Windham Baldwin Papers (Cambridge University Library, Cambridge)

Windham Baldwin 3: Research material for ‘My father: the true story’, 1932-1958

BALFOUR – The Papers of the Balfour family of Whittingehame, East Lothian (The National Records of Scotland)

GD/433/2: Political and other correspondence

BEAVERBROOK – The Beaverbrook Papers: Sir William Maxwell Aitken, Lord Beaverbrook (Parliamentary Archives, London)

BBK/H: Newspaper and Business Correspondence

BEVIN – The Papers of Ernest Bevin (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

BEVN/2: Political Papers, 1940-1945

BEVN/3: Political Correspondence, 1940-1946

BEVN/6: General Correspondence, 1940-1945

BEVN/II/6: Foreign Office – Papers and Correspondence, 1945-1964

BLAND – The Papers of Sir George Nevile Maltby Bland (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

BLND/9: Foreign Office Papers, 1919-1946

BONAR LAW – The Bonar Law Papers: Andrew Bonar Law (Parliamentary Archives, London)

BL/37: Leader of the Party (1914-1915)

BL/98: Lord Privy Seal (1919-1920)

BL/102: Lord Privy Seal

BL/103: Lord Privy Seal

BL/111: Prime Minister, Special Series, Ministers' Letters and Confidential Department Correspondence (1922-1923)

BL/113: Prime Minister, Special Series, Subject Files (1922-1923)

BL/117: Additional Papers (1911-1924)

BRIMELOW – Notes of Two Conversations with Lord Brimelow (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

BIMO: Transcript of interviews conducted in 1982

BROOK – The Papers of Norman Craven Brook, Lord Normanbrook (Bodleian Library, Oxford)

MS. Eng. lett. c. 273: Correspondence, 1920-1964

MS. Eng. lett. c. 274: Correspondence, 1965-1967

MS. Eng. misc. c. 489: Speeches and drafts of speeches by Sir Norman Craven Brook, 1949-1965

MS. Eng. misc. c. 492: Newspaper cuttings, 1952-1969

MS. Eng. misc. c. 493: Miscellaneous papers

BULL – The Papers of Sir William Bull (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

BULL/5: Diaries with correspondence, cuttings, etc., 1920-1930

BURGIS – The Papers of Lawrence Burgis (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

BRGS/1: Biographical material, correspondence, and souvenirs, 1900-1979

CADOGAN – The Papers of Sir Alexander George Montagu Cadogan (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

ACAD/1: Diaries, 1933-1968
ACAD/2: Scrapbooks, 1890-1966
ACAD/3: Family correspondence, 1913-1968
ACAD/4: Political and personal correspondence, 1930-1967
ACAD/6: Speeches and articles, 1933-1960
ACAD/7: Autobiographical drafts, 1960
ACAD/8: Lady Theodosia Cadogan, 1914-1958
ACAD/9: Suez Canal papers, 1952-1957

**CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN – Papers of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman
(Second Series), Correspondence and papers of, and relating to, 1872-
1919 (British Library, London)**

Add. MS 52515: Letters of Victor Alexander Bruce, 9th Earl of Elgin, Colonial Secretary,
to Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, 1906-1908

**CHAMBERLAIN – The Austen Chamberlain Collection, 1677-1954
(Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham)**

AC/23: Mesopotamia operation papers, 1916-1921; letters relating to political
resignations and dismissals, 1920-21; general letters, 1920-1921
AC/24: Miscellaneous letters, 1919-1926
AC/25: Political papers, 1919-1921
AC/31: Irish affairs, 1918-1921
AC/40: India affairs, 1930-1934
AC/41: General correspondence, 1935-1936; correspondence relating to Austen's
publications
AC/42: Desk diaries, 1935-1937; general correspondence, 1937
AC/50: League of Nations papers, 1924-1929
AC/53: General correspondence, mainly as Foreign Secretary, 1926
AC/54: General correspondence, mainly as Foreign Secretary, 1927
AC/55: General correspondence, mainly as Foreign Secretary, 1928-1929

**CHAMBERLAIN – The Papers of Neville Chamberlain, 1768-1985 (Cadbury
Research Library, Birmingham)**

NC/2: Diaries, journals, and financial records, 1889-1940
NC/7: Other correspondence, late C19th-1985
NC/8: National political papers, 1905-1987

NC/9: Printed items, late C19th – C20th

NC/11: Anne Chamberlain's papers, 1861-C20th

NC/13: Letters of congratulations and support, and items relating to Chamberlain's death, 1903-1944

NC/18: Correspondence with Ida and Hilda Chamberlain, 1906-1940

CHURCHILL – The Papers of Sir Winston Churchill (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

CHAR/8: Literary, 1890-1945

CHAR/20: Official – Prime Minister, 1940-1945

CHUR/4: Literary, 1924-1965

The Churchill Oral History Project (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

CHOH/1/SPCR: Interview with Marian Spicer, former Civil Service clerical officer and secretary to Winston Churchill (1943-1945)

COLVILLE – The Papers of Sir John Colville (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

CLVL/1: Diaries, 1939-1957

CROWE – Archive of Sir Eyre Crowe (Bodleian Library, Oxford)

MS. Eng. c. 6035: Personal papers preserved by Sir Eyre Crowe for his family, 1880-1924

MS. Eng. d. 2901: Letters from Sir Eyre to his wife Clema, 1907

MS. Eng. d. 2092: Letters from Sir Eyre to his wife Clema, 1907-1911

MS. Eng. d. 2903: Letters from Sir Eyre to his wife Clema, 1911-1914

MS. Eng. d. 2904: Letters from Sir Eyre to his wife Clema, 1919

MS. Eng. d. 2905: Letters from Sir Eyre to his wife Clema, 1919-1920

MS. Eng. d. 2906: Letters from Sir Eyre to his wife Clema, 1920-1923

MS. Eng. d. 2907: Letters from Sir Eyre to various members of his family, 1892-1924

MS. Eng. d. 2908: Letters from Sir Eyre to members of his family, 1913-1924

MS. Eng. d. 2910: Miscellaneous printed items and ephemera, 1909-1920

MS. Eng. e. 3020: Letters from Sir Eyre to his wife Clema, 1914-1916

MS. Eng. e. 3021: Letters from Sir Eyre to his wife Clema, 1916-1918

MS. Eng. e. 3022: Letters from Sir Eyre to his wife Clema, 1919

MS. Eng. e. 3023: Letters from Sir Eyre to his wife Clema, 1919

MS. Eng. e. 3024: Letters from Sir Eyre to his wife Clema, 1919

MS. Eng. e. 3025: Letters from Sir Eyre to his wife Clema, 1919

MS. Eng. e. 3026: Letters from Sir Eyre to his wife Clema, 1919

**CURZON – Papers of the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, Viceroy of India
1898-1905; Lord Privy Seal 1915-1919; Foreign Secretary 1919-1924
(British Library, London)**

Mss Eur F 111-112, Series 100: Lord Curzon, Foreign Secretary 1919-1924 – General
Correspondence

**DAVIDSON –The Papers of John Campbell Davidson, MP, 1889-1970
(Parliamentary Archives, London)**

DAV/61: Cabinet Papers and Memoranda, 1917

DAV/122: Miscellaneous Printed Papers, 1920

**DAWSON – Archive of Geoffrey Dawson, editor of *The Times*, 1893-1963
(Bodleian Library, Oxford)**

Dawson 30-33: Diaries, 1926-1929

Dawson 38-41: Diaries, 1934-1937

Dawson 42-45: Diaries, 1938-1941

Dawson 54: Notebook, 1932

Dawson 72: Correspondence and papers, January 1926 – October 1927

**EDEN – Avon Papers: The Personal and Political Papers of Anthony Eden,
1st Earl of Avon, 1760-1984 (Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham)**

AE. L. Add.: Additional material from the Avon Papers

AP/8: Resignation, 1938

AP/9: Resignation, 1957

AP/13: Mainly political papers, 1925-1956

AP/14: Personal and political correspondence, 1921-1960

AP/15: Congratulatory letters, 1931-1961

AP/20: Political and personal documents, 1913-1978

AP/23: Post-resignation correspondence with notable people, 1953-1982

AP/24: Post-resignation non-political correspondence, 1956-1984

ELIBANK – The Papers of Alexander William Charles Oliphant Murray, Baron Murray of Elibank and correspondence and papers of his brother, Arthur Cecil Murray, Viscount Elibank (The National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh)

MS 8809: Correspondence of Arthur Murray, 1937-1944

MS 8810: Correspondence of Arthur Murray, 1945-1948

MS 8811: Correspondence of Arthur Murray, 1949-1953

MS 8812: Correspondence of Arthur Murray, 1954-1962

Acc. 4422: Photocopies of five letters, 1943, of Viscount Elibank to Lord Hankey

FISHER – The Papers of Norman Fenwick Warren Fisher (unarchived material, in the possession of Ms Annie Pollock)

FLOUD – The Papers of Sir Francis Floud (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

FLUD/3: Customs and Excise, 1928-1930

FLUD/7: Civil Service, General, 1925-1938

GREAVES – Papers of Greaves, Harold Richard Goring; political scientist (British Library of Political and Economic Science, London School of Economics, London)

COLL MISC 0461: Copies of papers and reports mainly concerning defence, collected by Professor H.R.G. Greaves for a biographical study of Fisher

GRIGG – The Papers of Sir Percy James Grigg (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

PJGG/2: General correspondence, 1925-1939

PJGG/9: War Office – correspondence, 1942-1945

HALDANE – Correspondence and Papers of Richard Burdon Haldane, Viscount Haldane of Cloan (1856-1928), the statesman, lawyer and philosopher (The National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh)

MS. 5914: Correspondence of Richard Burdon Haldane, 1918-1920

MS. 5916: Correspondence of Richard Burdon Haldane, 1923-1925

MS. 5917: Correspondence of Richard Burdon Haldane, 1926-1928

MS. 20260: Correspondence and papers of, and to, members of the Haldane family,
1735-1948

**HALIFAX – Hickleton Papers of the Earls of Halifax (Borthwick Institute
for Archives, York)**

HALIFAX/A4: Wood Family, Official and Professional Papers

**HANKEY – The Papers of Adeline Hankey (Churchill Archives Centre,
Churchill College, Cambridge)**

AHKY/1: Family correspondence, 1903-2003

AHKY/4: Other material, 1899-2002

**HANKEY – The Papers of Maurice Hankey (Churchill Archives Centre,
Churchill College, Cambridge)**

HNKY/1: Diaries, 1903-1961

HNKY/2: Newspaper Cuttings, 1917-1967

HNKY/3: Personal Correspondence, 1890-1964

HNKY/4: General Correspondence, 1893-1962

HNKY/5: General Correspondence – Special, 1910-1973

HNKY/8: Cabinet Office, 1919-1944

HNKY/10: Cabinet, 1939-1941

HNKY/13: Political, 1942-1960

HNKY/14: Suez Canal – Correspondence, 1938-1958

HNKY/15: Suez Canal – Papers, 1944-1957

HNKY/16: Suez Canal – Miscellaneous, 1945-1962

HNKY/23: Personal – Miscellaneous, 1865-1962

HNKY/24: Historical, 1943-1960

**HARDINGE – The Private Papers of Charles Hardinge, first Baron Hardinge
of Penshurst, 1858-1944 (Cambridge University Library, Cambridge)**

Hardinge 22: Correspondence and miscellaneous papers, 1916

Hardinge 35: Correspondence and miscellaneous papers, 1917

Hardinge 36: Correspondence and miscellaneous papers, 1918

Hardinge 37: Correspondence and miscellaneous papers, 1918

Hardinge 38: Correspondence and miscellaneous papers, 1918

Hardinge 39: Correspondence and miscellaneous papers, 1918

Hardinge 40: Correspondence and miscellaneous papers, 1918-1919
Hardinge 41: Correspondence and miscellaneous papers, 1919
Hardinge 42: Correspondence and miscellaneous papers, 1920
Hardinge 43: Correspondence and miscellaneous papers, 1920
Hardinge 44: Correspondence and miscellaneous papers, 1920-1921
Hardinge 92: Correspondence with persons in England and abroad, 1910-1913
Hardinge 93: Correspondence with persons in England and abroad, 1913-1915
Hardinge 94: Correspondence with persons in England and abroad, 1915-1916

HOARE – The Papers of Sir Samuel John Gurney Hoare, Viscount Templewood, 1880-1959 (Cambridge University Library, Cambridge)

Templewood V: Secretary of State for Air 1922-1924 and 1924-1929, and opposition, 1922-1929
Templewood VIII: Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1935
Templewood IX: First Lord of the Admiralty, 1936-1937
Templewood X: Political papers, 1937-1939
Templewood XI: Lord Privy Seal, September 1939-April 1940
Templewood XIII: Ambassador to Spain, 1940-1958
Templewood XVI: Penal Reform, 1945-1959
Templewood XVII: Post-war papers, 1944-1959
Templewood XVIII: Literary papers, 1925-1959
Templewood XIX: *Nine Troubled Years*, 1949-1958

HODSOLL – The Papers of Sir Eric John Hodsoll (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

HDSL/2: Committee of Imperial Defence, 1921-1938
HDSL/4: Civil Defence, Pre-Second World War, 1930-1942

HORE-BELISHA – The Papers of Leslie Hore-Belisha (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

HOBE/1: Diaries, 1931-1947
HOBE/5: War Office, 1937-1940
HOBE/7: Personal correspondence, 1932-1954

ISMAY – The Papers of Ismay, General Hastings Lionel, 1st Baron Ismay of Wormington (Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King’s College London, London)

ISMAY/1: Personal correspondence, including speeches and material for memoirs, 1893-1959

ISMAY/3: Correspondence relating to Ismay’s service in British Somaliland

ISMAY/4: Correspondence between Ismay and FM Alan Francis Brook, 1st Viscount Alanbrooke of Brookeborough, 1946-1963

JACOB – The Papers of Sir Ian Jacob (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

JACB/1: Private diaries and notebooks, 1917-1982

JACB/II/1: Additional Jacob papers, 1899-1993

JEBB – The Papers of Cynthia, Lady Gladwyn (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

CGLA/2: Diaries, 1913-1989

JEBB – The Papers of 1st Lord Gladwyn (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

GLAD/1: Correspondence, notes, and official papers, 1923-1994

GLAD/3: Diaries and notebooks, 1917-1995

GLAD/7: Family correspondence, 1895-1978

GLAD/8: Personal correspondence, 1917-1996

JONES – Dr Thomas Jones (CH) Papers (The National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth)

2: Notebooks

P/3: Miscellaneous notes

KEYNES – The Papers of John Maynard Keynes (Archive Centre, King’s College, Cambridge)

JMK/L: Letters, 1906-1946

JMK/PS: Speeches and lectures given outside Cambridge University, 1905-1946

**KNATCHBULL-HUGESSEN – The Papers of Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen
(Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)**

KNAT/1: Diaries, 1915-1952

**LAWFORD – The Papers of Valentine Lawford (Churchill Archives Centre,
Churchill College, Cambridge)**

LWFD/1: Diary, 1943-1944

LWFD/2: Typescript extracts from diaries and letters, 1937-1949

**LEEPER – The Papers of Alexander Wigram Allen Leeper (Churchill
Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)**

LEEP/1: Personal Diaries, 1918-1935

LEEP/3: Correspondence, 1902-1939

**LINDSAY – The Papers of the Earls of Crawford and Balcarres (The
National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh)**

Acc. 9769: Papers pertaining to the literary, diplomatic, and political activities of the family

**LLOYD – The Papers of Selwyn Lloyd (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill
College, Cambridge)**

SELO/1: Personal correspondence – General, 1910-1978

SELO/6: General Public, Parliamentary, and Political Papers, 1926-1978

**LLOYD GEORGE – The Lloyd George Papers (Parliamentary Archives,
London)**

LG/D: Minister of Munitions, 1915-1916

LG/F: Prime Minister, 1916-1922

LG/G: Miscellaneous Papers, 1922-1945

**MALKIN – The Papers of Sir William Malkin (Churchill Archives Centre,
Churchill College, Cambridge)**

MALK/6: Letters to William Malkin, 1911-1934

MALK/9: Biographical details

MARTIN – The Papers of Sir John Miller Martin (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

MART/1: Typescript extracts from Martin's diary while Private Secretary to the Prime Minister and letters to his family, 1940-1943

MART/2: Typescript extracts from Martin's diary and letters to his wife, 1943-1945

MART/3: Material relating to the outbreak of World War II and Martin's travels with Churchill, 1939-1941

MART/4: Material relating to Churchill's return from Washington and the retirement of Sir Horace Wilson, 1942

MART/5: Churchill's diary for January 1943 and material relating to Churchill's travels, 1943

MART/7: Correspondence between Churchill and Martin, and various queries about Churchill, 1948-1975

O'HALPIN – 'Sir Warren Fisher, Head of the Civil Service, 1919-1939', deposited by Eunan O'Halpin (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

OHPN/1: Research, 1979-1988

OHPN/2: Interviews, 1979-1982

PHIPPS – The Papers of Sir Eric Phipps (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

PHPP/I/2: Correspondence with Members of the Foreign Office, 1916-1939

PHPP/I/3: General Correspondence, 1920-1940

PHPP/III/4: Photographs, 1913-1937

ROSKILL – The Papers of Stephen Roskill (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

ROSK/7: Books, 1945-1981

ROSK/10: Lectures, seminars, and speeches, 1960-1979

SELBY – Archive of Walford Selby, 1900-1965 (Bodleian Library, Oxford)

MS. Eng. c. 6595: Correspondence with Arthur Murray (later 3rd Viscount Elibank), 1916-1952

MS. Eng. c. 6602: Special correspondence, 1930-1953

MS. Eng. c. 6611: Memoranda and notes, mainly referring to foreign affairs, 1942-1960

MS. Eng. c. 6613: Background material for *Diplomatic Twilight*, 1942-1958

MS. Eng. c. 6614: Miscellaneous memoranda and notes, c. 1940-1960

SIMON – Archive of John Allsebrook Simon, 1st Viscount Simon (Bodleian Library, Oxford)

Simon 11: Diary notebook, 1939-1940

Simon 12: Diary notebook, May 1940

Simon 73: Correspondence and papers, 1932

Simon 79: Correspondence and papers, 1934

Simon 84: Correspondence and papers, 1936-1938

Simon 86: Correspondence and papers, 1940

Simon 87: Correspondence and papers, 1940-1941

Simon 101: Correspondence and papers, 1952-1953

STRANG – The Papers of William Strang, 1st Baron Strang of Stonesfield, K.C.B. (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

STRN/2: Career – Foreign Office, 1936-1978

STRN/4: Correspondence, 1919-1978

STRN/6: Photographs, 1929-1953

VANSITTART – The Papers of Lord Vansittart of Denham (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

VNST/1: Cabinet papers, many by Vansittart, 1930-1940

VNST/2: Minutes, 1933-1945

VNST/3: Official files, 1936-1939

VNST/4: Personal papers, 1909-1963

VNST/II/1: Correspondence, 1907-1982

VNST/II/2: Official and public papers, 1919-1950

VNST/II/3: Writings by Vansittart, 1909-1947

VNST/II/4: Broadcasts and speeches, 1939-1955

VNST/II/5: Cuttings and publications relating to Vansittart, 1924-1978

VNST/II/6: Career and Personal papers, 1899-1971

WELLS – The Papers of Ronald Wells (Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge)

WELL/Acc. 115: Memoirs of the Preparation of the Home Office War Book

**WILSON – The Private Papers of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, GCB DSO
(Imperial War Museum, London)**

HHW/1: Diaries

B) Online Databases and Digitised Sources

Hansard, House of Commons Debates, Fifth series, 1909-1981

Hansard, House of Lords Debates, Fifth series, 1909-2005

The Telegraph Historical Archive (1855-2016)

Times Digital Archive (1785-2019)

C) Multimedia Sources

Yes Minister (1980-1984), BBC

Yes, Prime Minister (1986-1988), BBC

D) Printed Primary Sources

Amery, Leopold, *My Political Life: Volume II. War and Peace, 1914-1929* (London: Hutchinson, 1953)

Amery, Leopold, *My Political Life: Volume III. The Unforgiving Years, 1929-1940* (London: Hutchinson, 1955)

Anderson, John, 'The Machinery of Government', *Public Administration*, 24:3 (1946), 147-156

Ashton-Gwatkin, F. T. A., 'Reform of the Foreign Service', *Public Administration*, 21:2 (1943), 82-84

Ashton-Gwatkin, F. T. A., *The British Foreign Service* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1950)

Attlee, Clement, 'Civil Servants, Ministers, Parliament and the Public', *Political Quarterly*, 25:4 (1954), 308-315

Barnes, John and Nicholson, David (eds), *The Leo Amery Diaries. Volume I: 1869-1929* (London: Hutchinson, 1980)

Barnes, John and Nicholson, David (eds), *The Empire at Bay: The Leo Amery Diaries, 1929-1945* (London: Hutchinson, 1988)

Beveridge, William, *Power and Influence* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1953)

Birkenhead, Earl of, *Halifax: The Life of Lord Halifax* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1965)

Bond, Brian (ed.), *Chief of Staff: The Diaries of Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Pownall. Volume I, 1933-1940* (London: Leo Cooper, 1972)

Bond, Brian (ed.), *Chief of Staff: The Diaries of Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Pownall. Volume II, 1940-1944* (London: Leo Cooper, 1974)

Bridge, Ann, *Permission to Resign: Goings-on in the Corridors of Power* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1971)

Bridges, Edward, *Portrait of a Profession: The Civil Service Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950)

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